



異世界狂想曲

デスマーチからはじまる

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愛七ひろ

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関西在住の現役プログラマー。
WEB 小説を読む内に読専から書き手に転向。ほのぼのとしたハッピーエンドな話を好む。ただいま絶賛禁酒中。

愛七ひろ
Illustration・shri

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「あの貰ってもいいんですか？」

「はい、貰ってもらわないと困ります」





デスマーチからはじまる
異世界狂想曲



タマ

猫耳族の少女。迷宮に取り残されていたところをサトゥーに拾われる



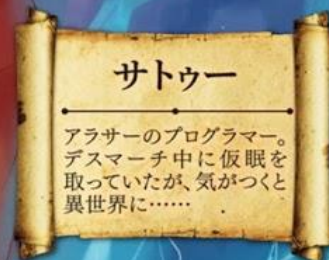
リザ

鱗族の少女。迷宮に取り残されていたところをサトゥーに拾われる



ポチ

犬耳族の少女。迷宮に取り残されていたところをサトゥーに拾われる



サトゥー

アラサーのプログラマー。デスマーチ中に仮眠を取っていたが、気がつくと異世界に……



ゼナ・マリエンテール

17歳。士爵家の令嬢ながらセーリャ伯爵家の魔法兵でもある

Prologue: 【Hellish Overtime Working into Armageddon】

Star after star rushes by.

Dozens upon dozens.

Have you ever seen a shooting star?

Some people would marvel at the fantastical sight, while others would shout out their wishes. I think everyone's reaction would be different.

However, the sight of a descending meteor crashing through the sky, now that's something you've never seen, right?

With a thundering crack splitting the heavens, striking the earth with its overwhelming mass and speed.

Maybe some of you have seen such a thing on television or a certain web animation site¹. Still, I don't think any of you would want to watch a downpour of meteors up close.

Right now, raining hell on the land before me, more than a hundred meteors are falling one after another.

Wait! I shouldn't talk like it's none of my business, since the culprit of this Armageddon is none other than yours truly.

What was then a thoughtless action no more than ten minutes ago, has become shooting stars that are carving out earth.

From a few kilometers away to the canyon over yonder, shooting stars are striking this vast expanse, annihilating the "enemies" I assume are there.

Though I do not know in detail, as dots on the radar display vanish like dust being wiping away in the corner of my sight, I am aware that countless

lives are perishing wherever meteors make contact.

Then, when most of the shooting stars have sunk into the horizon, the sounds of those impacts finally arrive, and soon after, the impacts themselves come as tremors.

I see the dust storm blowing across the ground approaching—
Suddenly, a searing pain assaults me as if by divine punishment.
Like my skull being sawed open.
Like being drawn and quartered.

That pain knocks me out, and soon, my body is swallowed by the dust storm.



Let's go back a in time a bit.

In order to rush the release of the later-than-late project, I was working overtime this weekend. My title is a programmer for a firm that develops smart phone apps and browser games commissioned by large companies.

No matter how heartless my company really is, it normally wouldn't force two or more projects on one person. But despite there being still so many bugs and spec changes on the verge of release, the young programmer who is my junior had vanished! How disappointing!

Due to high workplace turnover, the only programmers employed at this company were Kouhai-shi² and me. Unable to expect the company to find replacements in time, I was in a bind where, besides working on my own project, I also had to pick up after my junior's hack job of a project.

"Alright, all the class specs and annotations are done, then after getting the docs and dependencies from the auto-documenter, the bug is officially fixed~"

I stretch a bit and twist my neck with a crack.

Looking around, I see everyone here at work as if it's not even the weekend. Regrettably, that's a common sight at this workplace.

On the seat next to me, the man in charge of debug patches is doing his

work while grumbling, but no one is giving him looks. No time for that.

The artists and designers nearby are also working silently, sporting dead fish-eyes.

When I returned to my seat after making coffee, the computer has done its job, having compiled the data needed for debugging.

It was done without any of this data so no wonder it was a hack job.

Kouhai-shi was thrown to the wolves without time for OJT³, so there's no use complaining, is there? Half a year ago, there were once four programmers when my junior entered the company, and now I am the only one left, which makes me wonder about Corporate's opinion on this.

"Sa-...Suzuki-san, the client complained that the difficulty of WW is too high for beginners and made a request to change it, what do"

Turning around, I see Metabo-shi⁴, the supervisor and project manager, asking with his usual baffled expression.

That bastard almost called me Satou. It's been half a year since the team formed, don't give me that mix-up crap! ⁵

Also, despite the crisis at hand, he looks happy. Why is it that most developers are masochists?

WW is the nickname of our current main project, the web game "War World". It is a strategy game set in a fantasy world, with added social networking features.

"If we lower the difficulty any more, our target player group won't play, so didn't I say no?"

That's right, the current difficulty is a decision made after numerous client meetings. Letting all that wasted time be in vain? I might cry.

"The account creation reward we didn't use before, the set of one map exploration and three map annihilation bombs, would that work? By giving experienced players a title for clearing levels without using that, we can encourage them to proactively avoid using the rewards, no?"

"We have no time, so that'll do~. Well, please implement that, Suzuki-san."

Metabo-shi orders me casually as he always does.

“Wait a minute. I’m rushing the debugging for the mobile MMORPG, so go get permission from the client first! If I do that and get vetoed, there won’t be time to fix it.”

“OK, I’ll call to confirm~”

Waddling his wide torso, Metabo-shi disappears to the smoking area with his phone in hand.

From there, I calmly start working while talking to myself.

As the night goes on, I get the go-ahead from Metabo-shi, and fill my stomach with junk food.

After fixing the numerous careless mistakes Kouhai-shi made until dawn, I leave the rest to the debugging team.

Oh yeah, what’s the game called again?

I’ve always called it “MMO” or “Role Playing Game”, and can’t remember its official name.

...Right, it’s “Freedom Fantasy World”. Since that’s easy to confuse with WW’s old name “Fantasy War World”, no one referred it directly.

I think old specifications used FFW as the abbreviation.

After that, “Fantasy” was dropped from WW’s name, and “Role Playing Game” became a unnecessary alias as that game is now known as “Freedom Fantasy Life”, FFL for short. So, they are no longer easy to confuse, but we had already gone through all that trouble.

“Suzuki-san, the group testing Storage is reporting a bug!”

“What is it this time? If you mean the infinite capacity bug for non-premium items, didn’t I just take care of that?”

“That’s the FFL inventory bug, you know? This is for WW, something about an item duplication bug. Look at the attached file in the messenger for details.”

“Okay. Damn, duplication bugs are annoying!”

Ugh, working on both at the same time is confusing. By the way, Storage isn’t some external file storage, but the item inventory in WW.

I proceed to edit WW on one hand, and deal with each entry in the report from the debugging team on the other.

Meanwhile, I get a message from Fat Guy to remove the capacity limit of Storage when beta testing WW.

You bastard, trying to avoid a scolding by sending a message are you! I'll make you pay for lunch later.

Wanting to perform stress tests, the debugging team for FFL requests me to remove the level limit temporarily. Even though that should be the server team's job.

I curse as I continue to make changes. Ah, will it be an all-nighter again?

When the tests finish in the morning, we miraculously send out the client-side application for FFL.

There might still be bugs of course, but we can distribute the legendary weapon passed down generations known as "Update Patches" over the Internet, so there is no need to worry.

I can just hear the players raging, but I'm sleepy now.

After sending an executable package of WW that I made for the debugging team to Fat Guy via the company e-mail, I get my first sleep in thirty hours inside the haven under my desk.

Ahh, unparalleled bliss. Call me a corporate slave, but right now, sleep is justice!



Do you know the term "Lucid Dreaming"?

As in a dream where you know it's a dream.

I am out in the wilderness.

Yes, the wilderness. Just imagine the Grand Canyon in America, alright?

How do I know it is a dream?

Remembering that I was last falling asleep under the office desk is one reason, and another is that I can now see four "Icons" in my view at the bottom-right, a toolbar named "Main Menu" top-right, and a radar map

displaying my surroundings.

Same as the interface in WW which I was just working on.

Well then! This is not the first time that, when sleeping after a Death March, I have dreamed about debugging. It's a mystery why I'm out in the wilderness, and not at the office or in my room, but that's probably because the office was too dry, or some similar reason.

The smell of parched soil stimulates my nose. It even comes with a sense of smell, what a rare dream.

After trial and error, I finally discover that I can open the Main Menu with my thought. Trying to touch it would invert the display order and cause a bug where I can't do anything. Cute. Just like opening the Menu, I can just operate it by thinking, so it's no big deal.

It feels like the Main Menu items are a mix of FFL and WW, but asking for conformity in a dream is pointless.

My character name is "Satou", as expected. After always being mistakenly called Satou, it has become the name of all my test characters.

Besides my status being initialized to Level 1, and my equipped items happen to be the energy bar, wallet, and phone I had on me before falling asleep.

Wow, it really feels like a dream!

Looking around, I see in the edge of my eyes a place where the ground suddenly cuts off. Thinking that it is probably a cliff, I head closer.

Apparently, I'm standing on some sort of butte, right above a hundred-meter cliff. Nearby, there are similar pillar-like platforms protruding from the ground. Everywhere below the cliff looks the same, an endless wasteland of reddish-brown.

I can see a crack in the horizon like a crevice in the land, but when I open the map to check, every place but the surrounding is hidden. If this works like in WW, the map will be blank wherever I haven't explored.

The name on the upper left of the map reads "Dragon Canyon", so was that crevice the Dragon Canyon? I stare intently that way, but don't spot any

dragons.

I do see something else though.



Beyond the side of the cliff closest to me, something is kicking up dust and coming closer. It looks like a cavalry unit that might appear in fantasy movies.

I briefly peek at the four Icons at the bottom-right corner of my sight, three of which say “Meteor Shower” and one says “Full Map Exploration”. The newbie perks program that came about after intense brainstorming between Metabo-shi and me.

Driven by an unbearable sense of anxiety, I select “Full Map Exploration”.

When the radar finished scanning for enemies, the approaching group is labeled as hostile with red dots.

Since the radar window is too small, I open the map to confirm enemy positions.

The approaching group seems to be a mere tiny fraction of all hostile units. The entire upper half of the map is dyed in red by countless enemies.

...Uh, isn't that too many?

The hostile group approaching is labeled “Reptilian Tribe Elites”. Three hundred of them with levels averaging fifty. It doesn't look like the kind of opponent a barehanded Level 1 player can win against.

They stop five hundred meters away from the cliff.

To avoid being discovered, I observe them from behind a rock for now.

Though I know they are a cavalry unit, it's impossible to make out details with the naked eye. Judging by their silhouette, they're not riding horses, but I can't deduce any more than that.

One of the riders drives their steed this way.

Thanks to his approach, I can finally see their appearance. What they're riding on isn't a horse, but some Velociraptor-like creature; also, the

warrior riding it isn't human, but a lizardman.

“●●●●●●●●! ●●●●●●●●●●! ●●●●●●●●!”

The lizardman yells in an unknown language. Clearly, he did so only because he knows where I am. This is surely a ridiculous dream-like development.

The guy waits a bit for my reply, then, perhaps having become impatient from the lack of response, immediately makes a move.

He readies the longbow in his hand this way, and he pulls back the string. I can almost see his body glow red faintly, but soon I can no longer afford to care.

The arrow that guy fired, with a whistle-like timbre, shoots straight this way.

Yes, straight.

Without being deflected by gravity, it shoots toward me in a straight line. The instant I steeled myself against dying in a dream, the arrow merely scraped my cheek.

My cheek, it feels burning hot.

I touch my cheek, and my hand feels something slippery. I check my palm, and as expected, it has been dyed bright red.

I lick the blood on my hand, which tastes of iron rust—Is this really a dream? The doubt begins forming in my mind.

SHAAAH, the sound like that of a terrain-altering monsoon reaches my ears.

Arrows those soldiers fired fly this way, tracing out arcs.

I quickly slip into a gap behind the rock. Actually, saying I stumbled into it would be more accurate.

Without even time for one breath, several arrows strike where I just was.

The arrows that struck the ground first are knocked over by later ones. When I see the extremely sharp arrowheads, I feel as if dipped in cold water, shivering all over.

With the rock I am hiding under at the center, arrows focus-fired on a

circle with radius less than ten meters. You could say that they are all experts, but the me at that time was unable to admire that.

What is occupying my mind, terror.

If you have been chased by monsters in dreams, you should understand that terror.

I didn't have many options. Sit here and wait to die, or run away between the gaps of arrows raining down—or *retaliate*.

I select one of the three Meteor Shower Icons that has been sitting in the corner of my sight.

After indicating that it has been used, the Icon vanishes.

But, that is it.

"Come on, it wasn't even installed in the end..."

As if to agitate my frustration, the cascade of arrows continue to fall. Slowly but surely, the rock I am hiding under is being chipped down bit by bit.

"How powerful are those bows! Are these guys the Yoichi Squad⁶?"

As I curse, I also use the remaining two Meteor Shower Icons. However, still nothing else happens besides the disappearance of those Icons.

Finally, one arrow flies past the shaved-down rock and brushes past my shoulder.

"Damn! Losing due to a bug. Even Bad Ends should have standards—"

The complaints meant to drown out my uneasiness trails off. If you ask why, it's because countless shooting stars are breaking through the clouds.

I am completely baffled, as the scene takes away my breath.

Thanks for waiting.

We're finally back at the start.

Name: Suzuki Ichiro. IGN: Satou. This is how my life in an alternate universe began.

Chapter 1: Leveling Up

“Satou here. I’m what you would call a Japanese ant drone, but despite working hard every day, I have not been abused enough for that ‘Anywhere but here’ escapism. Being busy, I think, has its own merits. I’m serious!”

The pain that assaulted me just before the sandstorm seems to have knocked me out for two hours. That sandstorm was probably the aftershock of the earth being devastated by meteors.

The time is displayed on the Menu. Simple yet convenient.

I give it my all trying to get my half-buried self out of the ground.

Weird? Can’t seem to do it...

Feels like trying to get up from bed on a winter morning. I want to move my hand, but I’m so out of it I can’t even budge a finger.

KANG—

My foggy consciousness cleared as soon as I hear that metallic sound.

“There’s no way, right?”

I whisper to myself, but my mind is certain. It is the guy who shot the first arrow.

Confirming this belief, a red dot appears on the radar.

The map that has been open since before reveals him as the last enemy. An unexpected lucky survivor of three devastating Meteor Showers.

Was he so close, that the attack wasn’t able to reach?

“That means I’ve lost!”

A bit disappointing, but when my body feels like a ton of bricks I can only think despondent thoughts.

KANG—

The same mindset as when I lose in a strategy game all but vanishes, the moment I see that guy appear on the cliff.

The guy is bleeding all over, dyeing the tattered blue armor that managed

to avoid disintegrating until now in a bright red. Spitting out the spear held in his jaws, he slowly climbs up.

During the whole time, the guy glared at me without breaking eye contact. My limbs are shaking uselessly. Though I often have dreams where I want to run but can't, this is the first time that I've ever felt so terrified.

This guy is using his spear as a crutch, dragging along his broken leg. He is pretty much wounded all over.

If I had taken him by surprise and tackled him just then, maybe I can win by pushing him off the cliff.

...Well, too late now.

He looks so beat up, but his eyes contain a will to fight. He's definitely looking to kill me.

Unsheathing the sword at his waist, that guy tosses it near my feet. A part of his armor that had been hanging by a thread, unable keep up with such a sudden movement, falls to the ground with a clang.

As soon as he got closer, I am assaulted by the smell of blood.

But to shatter the sense of realism, a health bar is displayed top-left of the guy's head.

The label "Lizardman, Level: 50" is shown under the health bar mid-air. It's an AR¹ display like you might see from a smartphone app.

"It's just a game!"

I mutter to myself to ignore my trembling, and somehow my body feels a bit lighter.

"●●●●! ●●●!"

I have no idea what he said, but I know what he intends to convey.

"Are you saying 'Take this sword and fight!'?"

I force myself to budge despite only having recovered slightly, and reach for the sword. Maybe it's ridiculous to say this in a dream, but my terror is real.

I grab the sword with desperation.

For reasons unknown, the option to beg for my life hasn't occurred to me.

“●●●●!”

I hold out the sword, and ready myself for battle.

Up until this very moment, I have never learned swordplay or swordsmanship². My only experience swinging anything heavy was limited to using a hoe on my grandfather's field when I was little, and pounding mochi during New Years.

Hence, my stance is a bit impractical, only imitating what I've seen in manga or anime.

I grip down, and desperately try to stand firm.

“●●●●!”

That guy makes a small smirk, and holds his spear against me. His stance is composed, unlike my botched attempt.

He has been repeating the same sentence from before, something incomprehensible like “mokewgua” or “makuega”. Of course, I have no clue what he's saying.

“●●●●!”

Shouting and thrusting the spear that's now glowing red, he stabs my shoulder—ouch, it hurts a lot. Though I often hear that stab wounds feel hot and not painful, this just hurts. Very much. My mind is clearly stuck in a loop of “It hurts”, and I am unable to do anything.

That guy pulls back his spear, and jabs at my leg this time as if to torment me, then when he pierces my thigh, I stumble back from the new pain.

For a wimp like me, it wouldn't be a surprise if I faint from the fear and agony. But instead, the pain is subsiding; the feeling of panic too, for some reason.

Has the overwhelming terror pushed me over the edge?

The trembling in my limbs also vanishes, and my thoughts finally clear up.

It is evident that the guy's health bar is nearly empty, but I still don't think that I can win. Even if I take a swing at him, he can easily dodge and counterattack, and I will probably die from a stab to the throat.

Luckily, seems like it's also very painful for the guy to move.

While he's taking his time to torment me, I should take the chance and run.

I grab some dry dirt as I get back up. Taking out eyesight is a low blow, but I have no other options right now.

I carefully observe that guy's movements, and parry his spear thrust with my sword at a good time, which throws him off his balance, perhaps out of surprise.

Chance!

I slam the dirt at the guy's face.

The dirt comes apart, but still flies perfectly toward his face. Yet, my opponent is regrettably a step ahead.

He blocks the dirt with his arm.

Damn, even though he's already full of holes.

Still, the arm blocking the dirt is covering his eyes, so I swing my sword at the guy's foot, and let it go. Maybe I swung too hard, as the sword flies toward the guy's torso instead.



I was planning to take off the moment I throw the sword, but what I see stops me.

“What?!”

The sword flies with abnormal speed, cleaving the lizardman in two. The bisected halves splurt out blood.

Ugh, I can’t stand gory scenes!

Well, I don’t see anything more brutal than that.

“He’s disappearing...”

Like enemies defeated in a game, the lizardman’s corpse disappears. But, signs of blood covering wherever the guy had stood prove that the battle wasn’t just hallucination.

I sit on the ground exhausted looking up at the sky, finally able catch my breath.

Whew, what a tiring dream.

If it’s all the same, I’d much rather dream about flirting with busty bikini babes on a tropical island.



I take off my shirt to treat my wounds. It’s a bit chilly, but not enough to catch a cold.

I stow my tattered polo in Storage, and use my t-shirt to wipe off blood.

Unbelievably, the bleeding already stopped. So quickly you wouldn’t believe I was just stabbed by a spear.

I rub the dried blood with a finger, and when it falls off, there are no scabs underneath, only flawless skin.

You know, I haven’t felt pain for a while now. If I completely recovered because the mission was cleared, it definitely feels like a game.

I open the character status window to confirm, and sure enough, my hit points has returned to maximum. What’s more, the maximum itself has become much higher. Besides hit points, I have also gone from Level 1 to 310.

When I defeated the lizardman earlier with an abnormally fast throw, it was probably due to that high level. Including STR (strength), all my stats have increased as much as they possibly can, maxing out.

Evidently as the result of those Meteor Showers annihilating so many enemies, I had leveled up.

Wanting to survey the damage from the Meteor Showers, I peer over the cliff, but the scenery turns out to be absolutely horrific.

The wasteland is covered in dust that has yet to settle, and through the gaps I can see numerous impact craters.

The place where the lizardmen squadron had appeared is also covered in craters.

With that in mind, I figure that because the lizardman I fought moved away from his team, he wasn't directly hit by the meteors. But for him to be an inch from death merely due to the shockwaves, it's clear how powerful the attack was.

From afar I can see the crevice-like Dragon Canyon, which now has large sections that collapsed.

Rather than the aftermath of attack magic in a game, this looks more like the barren surface of the Moon. Well, after being struck by hundreds of meteors three times over, of course it would look like this. Perhaps because this all feels like something out of a movie, I still don't have any sense of realism.

Oh, right, this is a dream.

Feels too realistic to call it a dream, but it's also far from reality. It's probably most accurate to say that I've been pulled inside of a game.

A game should act like a game, so I hope that there is some Event after defeating all the enemies.

To gather more information, I look at the Log.

The Log begins with "Welcome to Our World". A meaningful greeting, but since the opening message in FFL is exactly the same, I quickly move on.

After entries about using the Icon and killing some lizardmen, there are

ones recording the death of dragons that originally ruled over the Dragon Canyon, mixed with ones about leveling up and receiving titles, and these continued until the entry on the defeat of the last lizardman.

What comes after reads “Source: you have conquered Dragon’s Canyon”, but the significance is unclear, so I choose to ignore it.

After that is a long list of loot acquired. Seems like that lizardman disappeared at the end because his corpse was also treated as loot.

So does that mean I have to become a necromancer?

Recalling the lizardman’s appearance while he was still alive, I create a Graveyard folder within Storage and collect all of the corpses under it. I ponder a moment, then looking the Graveyard folder, I wish for them to rest in peace with my hands together like praying at a Buddhist Temple.

I check my status, and notice that the newbie bonus I used before is now registered under the category Magic. It was disabled at first, but I can use it once I enable the new spell.

This is only a dream, but comes with such annoying little tricks, sheesh.

I cast the spell “Full Map Exploration”, but don’t feel the effects, so I decide to try the meteor spell.

I check the map again, but there’s no one besides me, so there’s no problem.

I wouldn’t know what to do if I didn’t test it first, then get told “Insufficient Mana” or something when I need to use it in an emergency.

I press “use” next to Meteor Shower under the Magic tab.

Maybe because there are no enemies on the map, a window pops up with the prompt “Select Target”.

With the same procedure for casting large area of effect spells in WW, by marking a target on the map. I select somewhere three times farther than Dragon Canyon.

That worked, it seems, since my mana bar is rapidly decreasing.

At a rate incomparable to “Full Map Exploration”, I feel something being continuously drained from my body. I didn’t have this sensation the first

time, probably because I wasn't using my own mana.

The drain of mana stops after a third the total is gone, or about 1000 points.

I look up at the sky.

The meteors haven't fallen. Going by previous experience, it should be time.

Then, exactly like before, meteors break through the clouds shooting down.

They're massive—what the?

The falling meteors, they're nearly a hundred times the size of the ones before. No, accounting for the distance, probably larger.

Before trying to figure out why that's so, I instinctively make a run for it.

In the opposite direction, of course!

Meteors, or colossal boulders, rather, cut through the atmosphere.

The sonic boom arrived, and I felt as if my skin was being pricked by a thousand needles.

Without keeling under the massive boom, I ran with all my might while shouting, but I don't quite recall what.

However, I do recall feeling like walking in water, running against strong air resistance.

I notice halfway that I am running too fast, but it is too late to slam on the brakes.

I spend all my effort on slowing down, but is still unable to stop. Having taken on all that friction, my sneakers break and scatter like confetti.

My ankles crush the stone below, and my fingers grabbing for the ground carve out ten grooves.

Still unable to stop at the edge of the cliff, I shoot into the air. But since I was able to cancel most of my momentum, I land on a ledge five meters below.

Whew, that was three times scarier than bungee jumping!

As the knee-buckling tremors continue to shake my world, I grab the ledge tightly, trying not to fall from that cliff.

Like a muddied river, the wave of dust and dirt flows across the land. Occasionally, I can see rocks the size of a small car rolling in the dust, sending a chill down my spine.

When the tremors stop, I decide to go back on the cliff, in order to see the effects of that Meteor Shower.

Dust is still everywhere, so I use my t-shirt as a dust mask to cover my face. It smells of blood, but it's at least better than choking to death on dust.

I poke my fingers into the cliff, and make some finger-shaped holes. Since the rock isn't particularly fragile, I am able to easily climb up the cliff.

Realizing that I am now bare-footed, I look through Storage once I get back on the cliff.

I find a pair of sandals and take them out of Storage, but seeing them covered in blood, I quickly return them.

If it has to be covered in blood, I'd rather the blood be mine

I take out my tattered, blood-stained polo, and rip it in halves to wrap my feet, fairly haphazardly, but they'll hold for now.

I look up, and a mushroom cloud comes into view from afar.

Walking up to the edge, I see the horizon glow red.

Is magma coming out of the crust?

Might be a simple fire, but I can't tell this far away, so I check using the map.

I change the display mode from 2D to 3D. I see that the target is now in mid-air. Probably because the surrounding terrain was drastically altered.

As I silently stare at the mushroom cloud, I open the Magic tab under the Menu, and change the setting for the spell "Meteor Shower" from "enabled" to "disabled", so I won't carelessly use it.

This spell is dangerous.

If I keep using magic like this, I will definitely go on the Demon King Route. "A wise man keeps away from danger", as the saying goes, so I better

seal up this skill.

The reason this Meteor Showers was much more powerful than the first, I'm guessing, is the level up or increases in certain stats like INT (wisdom).

Various other stats seem to also have increased. My STR (strength) that let me poke holes on the cliff. The high VIT (endurance) that held me up against the shockwave. Being able to sprint so fast I could feel air resistance, was probably the effect of something like DEX (agility) increasing.

After playing with a pebble in my hand, I figure out that I fortunately have no trouble controlling my strength.

If I just hold it or roll it around, the sensation and strength needed feel no different from doing so before.

However, once I intentionally exert strength, I can easily destroy it.

I try to sneeze while holding the pebble, and it didn't get crushed. That's reassuring. ³

Due to all that dust floating around, the weather is getting worse and worse, so I put up a simple tent I found in the loot, and get some rest.

I chew on my energy bar, while quenching my thirst with the "Bottomless Waterskin" I found in the loot. It is a magical item that never runs out of water. It's convenient, but if I want to know how it works it will probably keep me up at night, so I don't dwell on it.

It starts to rain, so I have nothing to do before it stops, and I get so bored I look through what I looted.

Perhaps due to the meteor impacts, most of the items are damaged. There are a lot of equipment, tools, and everyday objects, but the majority are broken, so I separate those into their own folder.

Gold coins, silver coins, jewels and so on pile into mountains.

Seems the dragons really liked shiny objects!

There are several different types of coins for each and every country, making me lose motivation to sort them all out. There were more Furuu Empire coins than everything else, numbering more than ten million, weighing a ridiculous three hundred and three tons.

Is it because the dragons regularly receive tributes?

I still can't figure out whether this is a game or a dream, but I probably don't need to worry about money once I reach a village. I just hope it doesn't trade only by bartering.

Among the magical items, I find things like Holy Swords, Divine Swords, and Magic Guns.

My delusional side⁴ I thought had disappeared is intrigued.

The name of the Holy Swords are Excalibur and Durendal. So cheesy it really feels like a dream I would have.

I don't know if the Holy and Divine Swords have some sort of anti-theft measure, but I felt a shock like static electricity as soon as I draw them, so I put them back.

Though I only used it for a moment, swinging a Holy Sword leaves a trail of blue light. Very pretty. The blue light disappeared mid-way, so maybe it's glow-in-the-dark.

Next, I take out the Magic Gun from Storage and try shooting a rock nearby, and although there is a small but noticeable lag between pressing the trigger and firing, the power is nothing to scoff at.

Okay, enough playing, back to organizing.



At some point, the rain stopped.

While organizing Storage, I seemed to have fallen asleep. Since that was the first sleep I have gotten in some time, I am wide awake now. To have slept so soundly on hard rock, I was clearly exhausted.

I take out a bucket from storage and fill it up with water to wash my face.

Oh? I saw something odd. I look again, and it's clear I didn't see it wrong.

I take a picture with the flip phone in my pocket.

"Um, it's my appearance from around tenth grade."

Maybe I'm overthinking it, but even my voice sounds younger. Whatever, it's not like dreams where you become a student again is uncommon.

I've rested enough, and it's boring to just sit here, so let's move!

I find out the map that, a hundred kilometers west of here, there's a facility labeled "Warrior's Fort". No one's there, and it's on the edge of the map, so the situation there is unknown.

Since there is no other significant man-made structure nearby, I decide to head there.

Before I go, I check out the Skill tab of the Menu for a bit.

I skipped over the Skill tab yesterday, but it's filled with all sorts of new skills. A total of eleven: "Single-Handed Sword", "Throwing", "Dodging", "Running Away", "Strategy Magic: Alternate World", "Summoning Magic: Alternate World", "Fear Resistance", "Pain Resistance", "Self Healing", "Observation", and "Ancient Reptilian Language".

If I learned these by leveling up, it feels like there is too few.

Do I gain skills based on my actions?

Skill levels go from one to ten, and I can level them up by adding skill points. One point for one level, a simple design, and since I now have thirty-one hundred points left, I will distribute points as I please.

I don't want a repeat of the encounter with the lizardman yesterday, so I max out all the technique and resistance skills that might be useful in battle. The skills can still be turned on or off after receiving skill points.

Then after descending the cliff, I run across the terrain.

My new shoes are the "Feather Footgear" I found when organizing Storage, with the ambiguous effect "Small support when traveling on rough ground" yet quite reliable.

I have also put on a magician's robe from my loot made of Yuriha fiber, which I have never heard of.

Due to my high stats, I don't feel any exhaustion and my breath is not the least bit shallow, even though I am running at the speed of nearly sixty kilometers per hour. I would slow down if I let my mind wander, so instead I focus on running.

Facing away from the rising sun, I don't think about anything but running.

Hmm? What was that?

While running by leaps and bounds towards Warrior's Fort, I felt something like a thin membrane going through my body. It really bothers me so I turn back, and about a kilometer away from the fort, I find a transparent film-like wall.

I stare at the the invisible wall for a bit, and the AR displays a window that says "Edge of the Dragon's Canyon Barrier". Not sure how I feel about it, but something fantastical like a "Barrier" has appeared.

Though there is some resistance, entering and exiting doesn't seem to be restricted.

The membrane seems to block airflow, because when I kick up the dirt under my feet, it is stopped at the edge of the barrier. The environment is also separated by this barrier, as the originally brownish-red wilderness, has now become a light-brownish wilderness with some grass.

Well, the wilderness part didn't change.

I take off the cloth covering my mouth as a face mask, and finally take a deep breath.

Haah, clean air is great.

With a slightly low humidity, it feels like the winter air.

After going through the barrier, I immediately arrived at my destination, the Warrior's Fort.

There stands a bowl-shaped plaza similar to the Colosseum, a small-ish stone fort.

A few places have already collapsed, making it look more abandoned than I had imagined.

Though I already know from the map that there's not a soul here, I see now that this place is long-deserted, and has become a haven for dust and cobwebs.

I investigate the inside of the fort and the surroundings, and only found a row of tombstones behind the Colosseum.

This place seems to be the edge of the Dragon's Canyon, and as I step away from the fort, the range of the radar shrinks to the area dozens of meters around me.

I open up the map, and the name displayed on the top-left changed from "Dragon's Canyon" to "Seiryuu County, Shiga County".

Hmm, a monarchical nation.

If this were a fairy tale, I might meet a beautiful princess and fall in love, but with my personality I'll probably become Support Character A cheering from the sidelines.

I don't know where this dream will take me, but let's not try too hard, and set making friends with a nice busty maid as my goal. ⁵

I investigate "Seiryuu County" with the "Full Map Exploration" spell, but not before testing some things. Turns out, the AR display is a function of the Menu, while the map exploration spell provides additional information.

As I am testing, I also open up the map and look for where people are.

The design of the map is similar to the one in WW, and after the entire map has been explored, in addition to displaying the terrain, searching and filtering people and beasts are also possible.

The closest town nearby is twenty kilometers away, Seiryuu City.

There is another city, but it's fifty kilometers away in the mountains, so that's out of the question. There are quite a few villages, but they are all farther than Seiryuu City, there's no need take the long way.

This Seiryuu County of Shiga Kingdom is about sixty kilometers east-to-west, and seventy kilometers north-to-south.

I think it's bigger than Tokyo but smaller than Chiba? I'm not very confident, though, because I learned that while making scale models in middle school.

Five kilometers away, in the direction of Seiryuu city, there's a group of not more than a hundred that I think is an army. Their highest level is

thirty-one, but the average only about seven.

Unexpectedly low...

As I exclaimed, I examine the map again.

Within the entire map, fewer than ten are above Level 40, and none are above Level 50. Seems like Level 310 would be considered unimaginably high.

Even so, I decide to go around the army to avoid trouble.

Maybe I'm being too cautious in a dream, but I don't want to go through the same thing again.

On my way to Seiryuu City, a fast-approaching red dot appears on the radar. I'm running on rocky terrain full of hills, I can't see anything even if I look.

I check the map, and it turns out to be a Level 30 wyvern.

In order to get a better look, I jump up on top of a rock.

"Ah?!"

My first time meeting a wyvern starts with a crash, then I am thrown back.

Whoa, I'm seeing stars.

I roll on the rocky ground for more than ten meters, and stop as I slam into a stone wall.

Good thing I have the Pain Resistance skill. Maybe because of my high VIT (endurance), I'm completely unhurt after hitting the wall with that speed.

How reliable.

Once again taking the sky, the wyvern flies in circles waiting for a chance to attack. Judging from the size of its head when it hit me, its wingspan should be at least thirty meters.

Rather than a wyvern, doesn't it look more like a pteranodon?

There is poisonous-looking spike growing on the end of its long tail, which is sort of like the wyverns seen in fantasies.

I pick up a pebble and throw it at the circling wyvern as a warning.

Wha? I was just going to scare it a bit, but the pebble punches through the

wyvern's wing and disappears into the sky. If this were a manga, it would fly away with a "ding" and a flash of light.

Though the wing was pierced, it was merely a pebble and couldn't possibly take down the wyvern, but that did scare it away. In the direction of a far-off cliff, the wyvern flies away awkwardly in a wobbly path.

Oh no. I think that's where the army is.

Well, the knight leading the army has a higher level than the wyvern, so they should be fine.

Still, I feel like I just pushed trouble onto others, so I decide to go check it out.



After three jumps, I finally climb on top of a twenty-meter cliff. I could have done so in two jumps, but tree branches sticking out on the cliff was annoying.

I can see the wyvern circling the sky like it has discovered prey.

I leap over several large rocks on the cliff, and watch for the army that the wyvern has its eyes on.

I'm probably about two or three hundred meters away from the army?

I can hear the commander's voice, but I don't know what he's saying even if I listen carefully. I can only speak Japanese and some simple English, but still, I can usually guess the language. However, it's unlike anything I've ever heard before.

It's not an "unknown language" you usually see in dreams, but a "fully grammatical language", like what appears in an overly-detailed anime.

Speaking of which, the way that lizardman spoke before was the same.

I'm no longer confident that this is a dream, but I'm afraid to guess what else could it be, so I'll keep saying it's a dream.

After dodging the question, I check the Skills tab in the Menu, and sure enough the skill "Shiga Language" is now available, and I try adding skill points.

Let's start with one point.

« You, make line, fast! »

Ooh, I can only make out bits and pieces, but I understood the commander's words.

I slowly increase the skill level, and I can now figure out that the sentence before meant "Get into formation! Quickly!".

After five points, my comprehension improves and I become fluent. I tried to max out the skill, but there isn't much change after six points.

Other than the language, somehow I also got the seven skills "Combat", "Sprinting", "Vertical Maneuver", "Enhanced Sight", "Telescoping", "Enhanced Hearing", and "Lip Reading".

In either FFL or WW, in order to gain a skill, I would have to complete very difficult quests or procedures, but this dream seems poorly designed in comparison.

The display was annoying while I moved around, so I had turned it off, but now I want to learn how skills are obtained, so I painstakingly change the log to display only a few lines, and set it in the corner of my sight.

Back to watching the battle—So, I distribute points to skills convenient for gathering information and enable them, the four being "Enhanced Sight", "Telescoping", "Enhanced Hearing", and "Lip Reading".

The army stands in a circular formation in anticipation of the wyvern's attack.

I concentrate my eyes, and due to the effects of the Telescoping and Enhanced Sight skills, I can clearly see the circular formation, as if looking through binoculars.

My field doesn't change, but the place I focus on appears clearly, as if zoomed in, how does it work?

It bothers me, but I'll investigate later.

I concentrate my wandering mind again.

The outer ring of the circular formation consists of heavily armored soldiers with large shields, and there are two rows of lightly armored

soldiers carrying spears on the inside. Moving in unison with the wyvern gliding above, the swaying spears look just like some kind of living thing.

Surrounded by those spear soldiers, ones holding crossbows are standing by in a crouch.

“Soldiers, have no fear! Remember your training!”

“Let’s see your Seiryuu spirit!”

A voice rang from within the circular formation, encouraging the frightened soldiers.

Yeah, of course, it’s scary to fight against a monster like that right?

Then, in the center of the circle, a robed, magician-looking person takes out a staff.

To the left and right of that person, stood lightly armored female soldiers holding something like conductor’s batons, which I thought were short spears at first, but as the AR pop-ups show, these batons are actually something called “short staves”. Their job should be arcane soldiers.

If they’re magicians, why don’t they wear robes?

Around the three magicians, there is a group standing by probably as their guards.

Outside of the formation, about eight horse-riding cavalry are galloping around.

It’s obvious that they’re keeping themselves on the side of the formation opposite the wyvern, in groups of four. They’re protected by full-body armors with a silver sheen, yet they’re hiding behind the formation?

“Watch out! Spearmen, don’t sway your spears! Hold it on the ground with your foot! If you don’t stand firmly you’d be knocked flying by the wyvern’s tackle!

“Bowmen, tighten your strings, wait for the spear to slow that thing down!”

The soldiers are not confused despite being afraid, all because of the commander’s clear orders.

Thanks to that, whenever the wyvern assaults the formation, it is repelled

by the spears, and backs away fruitlessly.

The bowmen are very skilled, with nine-tenths of their arrows hitting the mark. Even then, most of the arrows are blocked by the wyvern's hide, unable to do damage. Is it just the tough hide, or the level difference?

Well, just like in a game, critical hits are possible, and a girl among the guards protecting the magicians, hits the wyvern with only one shot.

I just noticed, there are also soldiers waiting in the trees some distance away from the formation, and they appear to be only lightly armored, which means that they're probably unarmed combat engineers in hiding!

...In other words, that army is fighting because it is confident it will win.

I was going to throw some rocks to help repel the dragon in case something happens, but it's probably not necessary.

I put the rocks back into Storage, and decide to just watch the battle.

After that, the wyvern assaulted the soldiers several times more, but is stopped each time by a wall of spears and arrows.

When the wyvern prepared to attack for the fourth time, the situation changed.

After the attack failed and the wyvern tries to fly back up, suddenly its wings lose lift, breaking its balance. As if slammed by an invisible hammer, it crashes the ground unnaturally.

That was probably magic.

When the wyvern lost its balance, one of the magicians at the center chanted a spell with a synth-like voice, then I hear the call "Turbulence".

The decisive word of this battle, appeared to me as two different words in stereo.

The modern and archaic terms are pronounced at the same time. "Ran Kiryu" and "Tahbyuransu" both appeared in my mind. The archaic version was translated into katakana.⁶ How interesting.

And the following spell that threw the wyvern on the ground, seems to be called "Air Hammer".

That was the first time I hear magic being chanted in this world, but how

exactly are the spells pronounced?

The final keyword I understood, but the spell itself sounds less like a real language, and more like an irregular string of notes. I think it sounds a lot like music made with DTM software⁷.

While I am being distracted by small details, the battle goes on.

The grounded wyvern lets out a pitiful cry, though its health bar hasn't decreased by much.

Still, the magicians seem to have accomplished their mission.

The excited soldiers repeatedly stab their spear into the wyvern as it's trying to stretch its wings to fly, yet the wyvern's health only dropped about two-tenths.

The higher-leveled knight, wielding a spear on horseback, pins one of the wings on the ground, forcing the wyvern on its side.

The remaining knights try to pin down the other wing, but they are thrown back by a single wingbeat, falling back several meters with their horses.

Where the wyvern crashed, it is less than a hundred meters from the cliff I'm hiding on.

Isn't it a little too close?

"...■■■ ■■ Lightning Strike!"

A magician at the center casts lightning at the wyvern.

It's not as bad as real thunder, but the flash of silvery light and the loud boom hurt my eyes and ears. Turns out the Enhanced Sight and Hearing skills have their downsides.

As my ears are ringing, I didn't hear the order to regroup, but the soldiers split into three teams, take out spears, and surround the wyvern. The magicians at the center each go with one of the three teams along with their guards.

Despite being pinned down and paralyzed by lightning, the wyvern still struggles.

One by one the soldiers are stabbed by the poisonous tail spike or bitten

by its large jaws. Spears cannot pierce its hide, and even point-blank arrows bounce off, but damage is adding up slowly.

The wyvern realizes that it would be defeated if this goes on, so it readies itself.

It whips its tail and sweeps careless soldiers who came too close.

Perhaps due to that move, its wing comes loose, and the wyvern takes off toward a cliff.

In my direction.

“Stop it! Zena!”

“Yes sir!”

The one who looks like the captain, gives a sudden order to the arcane soldier in the wyvern’s path.

Though they may be afraid, the troops deployed in front of the arcane soldier still bravely stick out their spears. Their bodies are weak, but their resolve is strong.

I’d run for my life if I were them!

“...■ ■■■ Air Cushion!”

Advancing at the speed of a short-distance runner, the wyvern crashes into an invisible wall meters in front of the arcane soldier.

The wall itself is invisible, but the dust and debris that the wyvern kicks up reveals its size. It is roughly two soccer goals stacked vertically.

Because I am watching from afar, the situation doesn’t feel very serious, but those involved probably don’t agree. As the existence of magic probably doesn’t change physical laws, a force equal but opposite to the one being applied to the wyvern is applied to the magical wall, and in turn to the arcane soldier.

The wyvern stops dead in its tracks, but the smaller soldier is flung far into the air.

The magical wall likely did its job as a cushion. Even though the soldier was thrown into the air, it didn’t turn into a gory scene. She is probably at most only braised.

Two spells are cast at the same time.

“...■■■ ■■ Lightning Strike!”

“...■ ■■■ Reduce Speed.”

One is lightning magic giving a decisive blow to the wyvern.

The other is a magic that slows down the fall of the arcane soldier who was blown away.

I didn't realize what the magic did at first, but seeing the falling speed decreasing, I now understand.

The problem is, the horizontal velocity hasn't decreased.

Twenty meters up in the air, she will fly right past me toward the other side of the cliff if I don't do anything.

Maybe because the battle felt so realistic, without even considering that this is a dream, I turned my ankles, and hopped on a large branch sticking out the other side of the cliff.

It looks scary, but I will be fine if I fall from this height. I've already done this once when I arrived here, albeit unwillingly.

I stop near the end of the branch, and reach out.

Almost.

I see a tree with slightly longer branches below, so I jump over and desperately extend my hand.

Gotcha!

As if waiting for me to grab the robe, the magic slowing down the descent of the arcane soldier disappeared, and gravity takes over again.

Shit, I reached a bit too far.

With her weight pulling me down, I hug the branch tightly, to avoid falling off.

I adjust my grip, and pull her up by her chest.

If this were a manga or light novel, it would be an opportunity for a lucky pervert scene, but unfortunately I only feel the hardness of her breast plate. A shame, but this is no time to be taken over by lust, so I just hold her properly and move toward the root of the branch.



She seems to have fainted when she collided with the wyvern, and is now unconscious.

I brush back her bangs drenched by sweat, and see a cute face. The AR displays the name Zena Mariantell, 17 years old. She seems to be the daughter of a Chevalier⁸. A Chevalier is a type of nobleman right? Never heard of it.

In short, she is a slim and natural beauty, the type who is quite popular without her awareness.

Her smooth, light blonde hair is tied up, and her diminutive head protected by her headgear.

The lashes decorating her closed eyes are long, and the brows hiding behind her bangs trace out an energetic curve, trimmed or not. Her face without any make up is blushing a bit, and her small lips neither too thin nor thick has a smooth pink hue.

She probably isn't wearing perfume, but mixed within the smell of sweat, there seems to be a sweet scent that is unique to women.

She is wearing leather armor on top of her long-sleeved shirt and shorts, thick boots on her feet, and the firm robe that saved her life.

As I was too concentrated on saving her, I hadn't noticed until now, that the log has new messages informing me of my new title.

>>> Obtained title: "Savior".

>>> Obtained skill: "Carrying".

Seems titles are as easy to get as skills.

"Mm... Where's this?"

"Are you awake?"

I warn the girl who has just woken up.

"Be prepared when you look down."

"Huh? Eek!"

As expected of a soldier, even when she is on a thin branch sticking out of a cliff, she only let out a brief cry and quickly held back.

“Are you hurt anywhere?”

“No, my body is a bit sore, but it isn’t particularly painful.”

Perhaps not used to being around men, she seems to be quite embarrassed to be carried by me, so I let her down near the base of the branch.

“Ah, ouch!”

“Are you okay?”

She moaned painfully the moment she landed, so I rush to support her. She seems to have hurt her ankle when the wyvern threw her back. It probably isn’t broken, but sprained.

“Thank you very much. Where’s this? I remember battling the wyvern...”

“When I was climbing the cliff, you fell from the sky!”

“On top of that cliff?”

She stares all wide-eyed up at the cliff. About five meters up? About as tall as a third-story window.

“You were affected by magic or something, and fell very slowly, so I was able to catch you.”

“Is that so? Then you are my savior.”

Saying that, she sheepishly thanks me.

She is supposed to be a bit taller than me, but when she pulls down her chin, her eyes look up at me, resulting in a very destructive smile.

If I was still in high school, I’m sure I would fall in love at first sight.

But, I’m not a lolicon who would take advantage of a girl more than ten years younger, so she’s out of the question.

“It wasn’t much. I am a traveling merchant, the name’s Satou.”

The story about being a traveling merchant, is a setting I thought of on the road.

In terms of this world’s development, people might be barred from migrating, and normal travelers would be treated as vagabonds.

Though it’s very silly to be this cautious in a dream, considering the realism I’ve felt up until this moment, I might even be jailed if I’m not

careful!

In order to make my story more believable, I said that while looking into her eyes.

"I-, I-I-, I'm employed by the esteemed Count Seiryuu, Arcane Soldier Zena. I have been serving in the army for nearly two years. Seventeen and single, no-, no boyfriend."

Um, no one asked.

Looking a bit nervous, Zena tells me about her family with a serious expression. While I mindlessly responded, I find a stepping stone which I can use to climb up the cliff.

"Excuse me, we're going to jump over there."

I hold her in a princess carry, and easily jump on the stepping stone. She seems shocked, but not due to the pain.

"We'll climb up, so please grab onto my shoulders."

"Huh?! Climb up this cliff?"

"Yes, since there is actually a lot of rocks I can step on, let's climb up!"

I remind her to hold on, and lightly jumped from one stepping stone to the next, and to avoid giving her more stress, I use my entire body to cancel the force of impact.

"We're here!"

"*Haah, haah*, you're quite nimble!"

Through her armor, I can feel Zena's heart beating fast, as she clings to me tightly.

She raises her face slightly red from shallow breathing, and voiced her thought with a tremble.⁹

An interesting conclusion.

Maybe because she's still afraid, she doesn't seem to want to be let down from the princess carry, so I move between the rocks on the cliff, and bring her to her comrades.

"Halt! Who are you? Put down our comrade!"

On one of the rocks, a petite girl intercepts me and questions.

That's probably Zena's colleague! She cautiously takes out a crossbow, and aims at me.

"Wait, wait a minute, Lilio. This man is not a threat!"

"Zena-cchi, quiet."

Despite Zena's plea, she does not let down her guard. Well, that's expected.

I slowly lower Zena and let her sit on the ground.

"Now back away!"

"Lilio! This man is my savior, you know?!"

When I step back some distance, a heavily armored female soldier quickly runs up from behind a rock, grabs Zena, and retreats back to the rock. Soon another heavily armored female soldier enters, and points her claymore at me.

Though protests can be heard from Zena and her comrades behind the rock, it doesn't seem like she is going to put it away.

...Sheesh, no good deed goes unpunished.

"Who are you? State your name."

Though her face is hidden behind a mask, but the heavily armored soldier with a claymore has a melodious voice. Judging by her well-proportioned body that even the armor is unable to hide, she must be a beauty. It's a baseless assumption, but I'd be happy if it is true.

"Don't play dumb, state your name."

"Nice meeting you, Miss Soldier. I am a traveling merchant, name's Satou."

"You're a traveling merchant, but isn't your luggage surprisingly light?"

The bag on my shoulder is taken off.

It's something I found while organizing my loot yesterday, the tabletop RPG classic, infinite-capacity Bag of Holding. Its name is "Garage Bag".

I don't need it because I have Storage, but it's a fashionable black leather bag, so I equipped it as part of my costume.

Would a merchant who uses a Garage Bag be rare?

"It's a little embarrassing to say, but due to yesterday's meteors, my horse ran away."

"Meteors? You mean yesterday's 'Starfall', right?"

The Meteor Showers should have been visible from afar, so I use it as part of my excuse. So it was named "Starfall", quite a fantastical name.

>>> Obtained skill: "Deception".

>>> Obtained skill: "Explanation".

Come on, I did just come up with the story, but I didn't intend to get these skills. They seem to be useful though, so I put in some skill points.

"There's a hole in your story, you know. You said your horse ran away, but if you saw that Starfall on your way to the city, you're going in the wrong direction."

Too bad I can't see her face. I guess she must be smirking.

I'm being interrogated at sword point, but I still don't feel any tension, since the Menu and radar display that have been sitting at the corner of my sight, break my immersion. I feel like I'm in a game, and can't get serious at all.

Thanks to my now-enabled Deception skill, all sorts of good excuses appear to me.

"Excuse me, do you know of the place 'Warrior's Fort'?"

"Yeah, I know. Isn't that the place people go to kill themselves?"

A place for suicide? At least it's not forbidden to go there.

"The grave of my grandfather's friend is buried there, and on the way to clean the gravesite, I saw that 'Starfall'. I desperately ran after my horse, but I still couldn't catch up to it in its frenzy..."

"Really, what a disaster."

Oh! She believed me? As expected of the maxed out Deception and Explanation skills. Super effective!

"Please show your identification."

Identification? I do have my license in my wallet, but that will only

complicate things if I show that.

“Um, I left my identification in one of the hidden pockets on the saddle, so I don’t have it.”

“No problem, just apply for another at Seiryuu City.”

So she advised, putting away her claymore into the sheath on her back, then fastening the buckle.

“Wait, Iona, is it really okay to let him go like this? What if he’s some rogue?”

“He has slender fingers, and is wearing an expensive-looking robe. So, he must be some noble from a small kingdom up north.”

“He could also be a spy from somewhere, no?”

“Who hires a spy for Shiga Kingdom with a face clearly not from around here?”

The girl who stood on the rock jumps down and starts whispering in the ear of the armored female soldier, and thanks to the Enhanced Hearing skill, I overhear everything.

“What’s up, Lilio. He’s the type of cute black-haired boys you like.”

“For personal reasons, I hate them right now.”

“Ahh, did your boyfriend dump you? I’ll treat you to some food good for breast enhancement next time!”

“I didn’t get dumped because of my breasts! But thanks for the offer. Please listen to my rants too!”

As I listen to girl talk, Zena comes back after talking to the guards, and apologizes for her comrades’ rude behavior.

I head toward their base with them, which is unavoidable because the city is in the same direction.

If I bid my leave and head in a different direction, it would look very suspicious.

The smell of blood on the battlefield is repugnant, but, due to the effect of Pain Resistance, I only feel like vomiting, and didn’t actually do so.

On the battlefield there are several bodies covered by cloths, as well as

wounded soldiers being treated, and the massive remains of the wyvern.

...Did people die?

Unbelievably, almost none of the soldiers are crying, perhaps they are purposely ignoring the sadness, by burying themselves in work?

Men who appear to be combat engineers are taking apart the wyvern with a tough-looking saw. As if unsatisfied to merely bleed, every time the men pull the saw, the corpse splurts blood all over.

A knight who appears to be the commander sees Zena on the back of one of the guards, and drives his horse here.

This is the first time I see a horse this close, its rough breathing carries a beast's scent.

Don't stick your beady-eyed horse face near me. I only want beauties doing this.

"Zena! You're safe!"

"Yes, I was saved by this man here. He's Satou-san, the traveling merchant as nimble as a bird."

Zena introduces me. Even though she added some unnecessary descriptors, I won't say anything.

"We are very grateful. Thanks to you, we can end the battle without losing one of our precious arcane soldiers."

Sounds like he meant: *It wouldn't matter if she weren't an arcane soldier*, but since people are laughing, it was probably a joke, and not serious!

The heavily-armored female soldier who questioned me quietly reported our conversation before to the captain.

I am also asked about the situation around "Warrior's Fort".

Turns out, they are an investigative team from Seiryuu City, here to see whether there are any changes after yesterday's "Starfall".

Chapter 2: Seiryuu City

Satou here. I have the tendency to get excited whenever I talk to women. Problem is, ever since my girlfriend dumped me, my expenses are adding up at “The Store Where Beautiful Women Drink With You” that Metabo-shi and I frequent./

They’re going to send all the wounded soldiers who can’t go on, including Zena-san, back to Seiryuu City on carriages, and I was allowed to ride with this group thanks to her request.

On the carriage to Seiryuu City, I, Zena-san, and the heavily armored female soldier named Iona—an unbelievably gorgeous woman under the helmet—ride together, along with five young soldiers.

The girl named Lilio and the other female guard are staying with the main force. They’re waiting for the carriage transporting the remains of the deceased soldiers and the wyvern to depart, before resuming their survey of the County.

The severely wounded left on an earlier carriage, while the one we’re on is only carrying patients with non-life-threatening wounds. A non-combatant servant is acting as the driver.

Good thing they didn’t ask me to drive.

Probably to avoid aggravating the patients’ injuries, the carriage is trotting along slowly, moving at a snail’s pace. It’s only twenty kilometers to Seiryuu City as the crow flies, but it’ll take at least three to four hours to get there.

We are passed by carriages transporting the soldiers’ bodies and the wyvern’s carcass.

“Are you going to use the wyvern for something?”

“Yes, mantle and armor made from wyvern hide is tough, and sell for a good price. Merchants would also come buy the fangs and bones.”

“But for now, if there’s meat in the army grub, you gotta suspect if it’s that wyvern!”

“Does it taste bad?”

In response to my question, the two only smiled wryly at each other, without saying a thing; the driver answered instead.

“Very much so! It’s nearly as bad as rat meat. Tougher than wolf meat, smells worse than civet meat, so disgusting, you wouldn’t want to touch it a second time, no one would!”

“Excuse me, is it truly that awful?”

“Sir, please you don’t be so formal with a driver like me. Meat like that will be distributed to west side residents and slaves, so when the wyvern is put on the streets, it will be like a festival in front of the butcher!”

So slavery exists?

Don’t tell me there’s a slave class in this city?

I’m bothered by it, so I search the map while conversation is on hold. Eighty percent of Seiryuu City’s demographic are free citizens, while the remaining twenty are slaves. Upper class nobles or merchants, priests, and oracles are the minority, making up only a few percentage points.

After searching, I find that not only humans live here.

What you would consider normal people belong the Human Tribe, making up more than ninety percent of the population, with the remaining ten composed of Fairy Tribe people like dwarves and gnomes, and Beast Tribe people like dogkin and catkin.

There is surprisingly only one elf, despite being arguably the most famous race in fantasy works.

There are also many exotic races, like the Winged Tribe and the Jaguar Head Tribe which I have never heard of.

When I found people of the reptilian tribe, I was surprised, as the reptilian tribe probably refers to the lizardmen I saw yesterday.

I thought these tribes coexisted peacefully, like the fantasy races in western games, but outside of the elven tribe, nearly all demi-humans are

slaves.

There's also a demon tribe dude just living openly in the city.

Seems to be a fairly diverse kingdom.

"Ah, I can see it!"

"Oh? Is that the city's outer wall?"

"Yes! It's so tough it will even hold against a wyvern attack!"

It really is a magnificent castle wall. It protects this city, so should I call it a city wall?

The city wall is built by stacking large boulders, about ten meters tall judging from the height of nearby trees. According to the Map, it's also three meters thick according to the map, with tunnels passing through it. On the towers each fifty meters fifty meters apart, you can see soldiers on guard.

"Mr. Satou-san, once we get to Seriyuu City, do you know anyone there?"

Perhaps because the city is now visible, Zena brings up the issue again.

"No, unfortunately not. Therefore, I want to find lodging first.」

"In that case, the Gateside Inn is not bad. It's a hotel not far from the front gate, a bit pricy, but everyone says it's clean, and the food is delicious."

"Sounds great."

Miss Iona recommends a hotel to me. Being clean is a must. When I went on a low-budget trip abroad in college, I once had a room where bugs partied. What's more, good food is one of the enjoyable aspects of travel. I hope rye bread and stew would make an appearance there.

By the way, whenever I talk to Zena-san or Miss Iona, I would feel the two male soldiers with lighter injuries giving me imposing gazes.

Maybe because the shaking carriage hurts their broken bones, they haven't interrupted, but I really don't like being stared at with jealousy. If looks could kill, I probably died two or three times over.

"Then, Satou-san, I will come thank you personally later, so please enjoy your stay at Gateside Hotel."

"There's no need to thank me."

"That's no good! By the name of Mariantell, I insist that you allow me to

do so.”

Who knew the usually easygoing girl can be so bold and forceful.

No, is she’s trying to act tough?

If we were the same age, I would have mistakenly thought she liked me.

In the end, I feel bad for the other injured soldiers if I drag this on, so I promised her “I will lodge at the Gateside Inn”, then parted at the gate.

“Mr. Satou, please come this way. Is Sir Soun inside?”

Miss Iona leads me to the guard post next to the front gate.

Her second sentence was directed at the young guard standing in front of the post. The soldier, blushing from a beauty talking to him, hollars for Sir Soun who is inside the post.

Miss Iona lightheartedly says “Thanks” to the guard, then enters the post casually as if it was her own house. Like a chick following the mother hen, I cautiously follow her.

The window letting in light is quite small, so the office is somewhat dim.

“Long time no see, Sir Soun.”

“Oh! If it isn’t Little Miss Iona! Does your father still think roses are his calling?”

“I don’t want to talk about it, Soun-sama.”

Seems like he’s Ms. Iona’s acquaintance. The knight named Soun, with his two-meter tall towering stature, looks like a half-giant at that size.

“Oh, a boy huh? Well-dressed, but a bit on the skinny side! Eat a lot, and grow into a good man who can protect Iona-jouchan!」

No no, you misunderstood. Even if you pat my back to encourage me, I have no intention to answer.

She is a gorgeous beauty, and especially my type, but I can’t really handle strong women like her. She probably doesn’t see me as an option anyways, so this doesn’t concern me.

“You’re wrong. This man is Zena’s savior, and he lost his papers, so he wants to apply for a reissue.”

“Using the Yamato Stone?”

“Yes, please.”

Hope they don't use mysterious symbols that only they understand. Sir Soun leads me to a room, where there's a stone tablet as big as a twenty-inch LCD.

“Boy, here!”

I go to the large man waving by the tablet.

“I have to ask, you have never been wanted for a crime or committed theft right?”

“Yes, of course.”

I am an ordinary man with nothing to do with crime.

“Then, place your hands on the Yamato Stone and say your name.”

Is this a magic tool that detects criminal records?

As he ordered, I put my hands on the tablet. Wait, what does the “Yamato” in Yamato Stone come from? Will I end up going to space? ¹

My name... Rather than Suzuki Ichiro, my character name should be the right one.

“Satou.”

Seems like character name was the right choice. The tablet starts to glow pale white, and some text appears.

I've never seen the letters before, but with my Shiga Language skill, I can somehow read everything.

Wait, is it displaying my character status? If they find out about my being Level 310, there might be a huge fuss—What? These numbers look strange.

“Boy, you can put your hands down.”

The status displayed by the tablet, different from the values shown by the Menu, reads “Species: Human”, “Age: 15”, “Level: 1”, “Subordinates: None”, “Job: None”, “Class: Commoner”, “Titles: None”, “Skills: None”, and “Awards and Bounties: None”.

Just like my status before leveling up.

With a clue as to why, I check the Social tab of the Menu. Sure enough, the settings on this page have been reflected on the Yamato Stone.

Originally, its function was for users to edit their profiles for other to see, with a bonus sticky notes for memos, but now the tab has evolved beyond that.

Each item can be changed in the profile under the Social tab, like the status values that can be chosen from a drop-down list. The original value is probably the maximum. Things like like Names, Titles, and Skills that can also be shown as “None”.

I understand the rationale for other items, but what happens when I choose “None” for my name? Does it mean I don’t want to socialize?

“Oh, you’re already of age? I thought you were younger! Anyway, still Level 1 despite already an adult, you’re a little wimpy!”

Hmm? Younger than an adult?

That so? Indeed, I did find out that I became a high school freshman again while washing my face this morning. So 15 years old is the age of consent here, huh.

I respond quickly, and try searching the Map.

Nearly everyone Level 1 really are ten or younger. If I search for all fifteen-year-olds, the majority are at least Level 3. Therefore, I was seen as someone with only the experience of a ten-year-old kid.

As I wonder about this, he quickly jots down the records displayed on the stone tablet. His neat handwriting does not fit his appearance at all.

He writes “Notary: Chevalier Soun, Subordinate of Count Seiryuu” at the bottom, and taking off his signet ring, stamps it above his name.

“Here, don’t lose it this time! The processing fee is one Silver Coin.

The identification is made of *washi*-like paper². Not parchment, what a shame.

In exchange for the identification paper, I give him one Shiga Kingdom Silver Coin taken out from Storage through my pocket. There’s more than a hundred of each type of Shiga Kingdom currency, so no need to ever make change.

“Come on, so you do keep your money safe in your pocket? You’re quite

cautious! Don't part with your identification from now on either!"

He turns and asks Miss Iona, "What about entry tax?" There's an entry tax to get into this city?

Normally, commoners need to pay one Large Copper Coin, but Miss Iona said as a reward for helping Zena, the entry tax should be waived.

"Take this too, it's a residency permit. The permitted residency period is ten days. If you want to extend that, come to this post or the central office to apply. We'll process it for 3 Copper Coins."

He gives me a engraved wooden plaque, with an emblem drawn on it the same as the one on the gate, as well as some numbers.

These numbers, which I'm guessing is the date the residency period expires, are not like the numbers I know, but look like special symbols, each representing one digit, like Arabic numbers. ³

If guards find you staying here past your residency period, there's a 1 Silver Coin penalty. You'll also become an ordinary slave if you can't afford it, so be careful."

Probably because he has often said the same thing, he quickly and flatly explains to me. I should really remember this.

Still, becoming a slave once residency expires is quite harsh!

Isn't it similar to arresting vagabonds during the Edo period?

I stow the residency permit and identification into my backpack. Of course, when no one is paying attention, I move those into Storage.

"Thank you very much."

"Yeah, if you run into any problems you can consult the Jack-of-All-Trades shop next to this office. For a fee of course, but it usually isn't much."

My business is done, so I politely say goodbye and leave the office.

"Pardon me, Satou-san, but I still have some business with Sir Soun, so we'll part here. The place with the yellow sign is the Gateside Inn I told you about, it should be easy to find."

I look toward the direction Miss Iona points.

I try searching for a large sign I'd usually see in Japan, but find no such

thing.

Looking again carefully, I see a building conducting some business, and there's a pan lid decorating the entrance.

Is that really their sign?

I thank Ms. Iona, then head towards the hotel.

Conversation between Ms. Iona and Sir Soun can be heard from within the office, but seems like it doesn't pertain to me, so I give up on eavesdropping with Enhanced Hearing.⁴

Chapter 3: A Walk in the City

Satou here. Whenever I earned enough money working part-time as a student, I would go traveling with my girlfriend or my group of friends. The few times I traveled abroad, I realized each time how good I had it in Japan. In terms of sanitation and service, I have not seen a country that surpasses Japan.

As I stretch myself, I look around the town full of sights foreign to me.

I hadn't noticed this since I was brought straight to the office, but there is a semi-circular plaza separating the gate and the buildings. Is it to prevent congestion? Or is it for times of war? No idea.

It appears to be a stone city that I might see in movies or western 3D games.

The people walking around are also dressed in clothing that might have come from a game's design documentation, the men in tunics, and the women in old-fashioned dresses.

The wealth gap is quite large, as I can see women wearing patched-up dresses a size too short, and men in soiled shirts and thigh-length shorts.

I redirect my attention to the buildings.

Almost every building visible is a two-story stone house, but it seems like other materials like wood and bricks are also used in the construction.

On the other side of the row of roofs, tower-like structures are poking out.

There are vanes on the top of those towers, so are they windmills? Since my knowledge comes only from games and novels, I don't know for sure. I will be staying in this city for a while anyways, so let's take a look later!

Extending to the barely visible inner wall, the street in front of me is six meters wide. On the other side of the inner wall, there's probably the lord's castle.

Seems like Seiryuu City is a fortress larger than I imagined.

Still, what an amazing sight! As I am a game developer, it's impossible to contain my excitement in light of such a fantastical scenery.

But did I really dream up this view?

Such doubt lingers in my mind. I have zero talent for tracing out a realistic town like this, so if it really were my dream, it should be more tacky and bland.

Suppose this truly is a dream, it probably belongs to someone else.

The person who made this dream must really like games, so I hope this world isn't one that depletes my SAN stat. ¹

But my train of thought is interrupted by a soft sensation grabbing my arm.

"You there! You just came through the gate right? Right? I saw you looking around, so come to our inn if you haven't found a place to stay! I'll give you a discount, 'kay~"

"Wh-, what..."

"Come on, come on, it's not cheaper than the other places, but there are clean beds and delicious food cooked with love!"

I hurriedly close the map, and a cute brown-eyed girl occupies my view.

Braided and tied with a ribbon. her brunette hair has been tied into a modified side-ponytail. I can't see her clothing clearly due to our proximity, but I can tell that she is a middle school-aged girl. Thirteen years old as the AR reveals.

Although, judging from the pressure on my arm, she seems to have a formidable chest that belies her age.

This overly cheery girl is hugging my arm tight, forcefully pulling me along. Speaking of pulling customers from the street, in modern-day Japan, that's something you would only see at college fairs.

As I enjoy the lovely sensation on my arm, I am led into what seems to be a tavern. Coming in from the road outside, it's feel much dimmer inside. Judging by the sign I saw while entering the store, this place is the Gateside Inn I planned to visit.

“Mom! Mom! I brought a customer!”

“Hey, you’re being too forceful. Don’t trouble our customers!”

As she advises her daughter, a wide-set auntie walks out from the kitchen into the bar.

Well, I wasn’t going to reject the soft sensation on my arm, or complain about her forceful sales tactic.

Yup, softness is justice!

In contrast to her stern warning, the auntie exerts beauty from head to toe. About thirty-something? Calling her auntie seems too harsh. Let’s go with Madam.

Next to Madam’s face, the AR displays information that confirms my estimate. It truly is a game-like dream. The data shown is similar to the Yamato Stone before, yet the items are somewhat different. More details are displayed actually.

As the girl’s mother, she’s beautiful as expected, but why so chubby! Ten, no, twenty kilograms lighter and she would be my type.

Being married is a deal breaker though, since affairs only make everyone miserable, so no need to dwell on it!

“Huh? Doesn’t look like you’re carrying luggage, are you really a customer?”

“Due to yesterday’s Starfall, my horse ran away with my luggage... Fortunately, I had my coin purse with me, so I could enter the town!]

“How disastrous! A room here is one Large Copper per day! If you are willing to stay at the large bunk it’s two Coppers. If you eat at the tavern, you’ll get a side dish for free. That’s a special for our hotel guests only.”

Hmm, I don’t know how things work here, but if I ask to pay ten days in advance, I can figure out the exchange rate between the Large Copper and Silver coins.

The madam has the Calculation skill, so she shouldn’t make a mistake.

“Then let me pay for ten nights in advance.”

“Alright, that’s exactly two Silvers!”

I take out two Silver coins from my pocket and hand it to the madam.

Seems like five Large Coppers is one Silver. It might just be me, but the madam should have said "I'll give you a one Copper discount!" as a favor or something.

Aight, I got a place to stay, and now I really want something to eat! I only had an energy bar yesterday, and I'm a bit famished.

"Madam, could I get some food? I would like something simple."

"If you could wait two hours, I can bring out hot meals. The kitchen is closed, so there's only ready-made quiche and some side dishes."

Quiche is it? I haven't had any since that time at the diner last month! For a fantastical European-styled town, I was wondering if I would see rye bread and stew, but I seem to be mistaken.

"Then, please give me that."

"Okay, I'll get that for you, please wait here. Martha, have our customer register in the guestbook."

The madam goes into the kitchen, and in place of her, Martha-chan darts in, holding a rope-bound notepad seen in historical dramas.

I couldn't see it before, but Martha-chan is wearing a white button-up shirt, a light orange skirt, and a brown corset supporting her breasts, while her shoes are soft leather slippers.

"Alrighty~ okyaku-san², I'll write so please tell me your name.」

"I'm Satou."

"Satou-san, is it? Please tell me your profession and age~」

I nearly tell her that I'm a twenty-nine-year-old programmer before catching myself. My character status says fifteen after all, and the identification also shows that age.

"Traveling merchant, fifteen."

"Huh?! You're older? I thought we were the same age!"

Martha-chan is very shocked, but continues to scribble on the pad, which seems to be made of papyrus.

While registering, she didn't ask for my identification.

Having finished writing, Martha-chan seems to want to chat, just as the madam steps out of the kitchen holding dishes of food.

"Thanks for waiting, the side dish is on the house!"

Might be my imagination, but the madam purposely cuts between me and Martha-chan, and puts down each dish on the table.

What I see is a fan-shaped slice of quiche cut in halves and a small dish of pickled Chinese cabbages. The quiche is nice and solid. The utensil is a wooden fork.

I give her a Copper coin in exchange. I feel like I'm paying a ten-yen coin.

Right, anyway, enough about that, I've waiting a whole day for some proper food, so bon appetit!

The main course is a solid quiche made with a lot of potatoes.

Decorating it are mushrooms and a leaf vegetable that looks like spinach, as well as, some red stuff that might be onion?

The food is cold, but it's more delicious than I imagined.

It would be great if there's some jerky, but asking too much of someone giving me food isn't right.

"Mom's quiche tastes even better right out of the oven!"

"Martha, did you clean the room of the coward merchants who left this morning?"

"Sorry, not yet."

"Then get to it!"

"Okay~! Bye, okyaku-san."

Martha-chan says, then proceeds to go upstairs to clean.

Who are the coward merchants?

"Oh, they're the group who left this morning, after seeing yesterday's Starfall and saying 'The Demon King is fighting the dragons at Dragon's Canyon!'"

Did I affect your business? My bad.

Wait, actually, there's a keyword I'm concerned about.

"So the Demon King exists?"

“Well, existed. It’s been sixty or seventy years since the Hero³ defeated it, but I haven’t heard anything about its revival in any country.”

So be it, the Demon King, and the Hero.

Good thing it has been defeated. If this were a game, it would probably revive as soon as the main character triggers an event.

It’s better if I don’t dig deeper.

“Actually, for more than six hundred years since the Shiga Kingdom was founded, no Demon King has ever appeared in Seiryuu City or anywhere in the County! If the Demon King does attack, it will likely show up near Dungeon City. It’s on the other side of the kingdom so no need to worry!”

Um, if this were a game, that would be the flag for a Demon King attack!

“To tell the truth, wyverns are more of a threat in this city. Not just the children, even young men in the fields and transport carriages could be snatched away! The army is strong, so Seiryuu City is quite safe, but those outside the gates work on the fields all worried, wondering whether a wyvern will attack!”

This place is scarier than I expected!

“Wait, could a dragon attack this city?”

“Don’t you know the legends? Dragons are very lazy! They’re always sleeping in Dragon’s Canyon, and rarely leave there. The last time was two years ago, and the time before that was way before I was born. When the black dragon came two years ago, the goats and sheep were all eaten, it was very tragic!”

She only mentioned livestock because people didn’t get hurt right?

I want to chat more, but the madam is needed in the kitchen.

Before I finish the rest of the quiche, let’s try the vegetable in the side dish!

The pickled vegetable side dish isn’t chinese cabbage, but actually cabbage.

The color is white-ish so I mistook it, but it tastes like sauerkraut that I’ve had before at a German beer store.

That's diced parsley on top probably.

According to Martha-chan who is now coming down from second floor, if I mix that in it won't taste too sour.

Wait did you already finish cleaning? It hasn't even been ten minutes you know?

As I eat, I ask Martha, who doesn't seem to be very busy, about where to buy everyday items.

I do have the Map, so I know where stores are, but information is important.

"Huh? Everyday items? If you need those, there are some open-air shops on the east side, you can get them there! If it's only a few things, you can have the maid here buy them."

"Thanks for the offer, but I want to buy some clothing and underwear, so I will go myself."

Sending the maid to run errands feels like a luxury, which sounds nice, but to allow some stranger buy underwear for me makes me cringe.

"Hmm~ if you want second-hand clothing, Eastern Boulevard has stalls that sell it!"

"Second hand is a little..."

"If you want brand new clothes, there's a store on Central Boulevard that can tailor, it's the best, but also very expensive."

"I don't need a tailor, aren't there new ready-made clothes?"

"Ready-made? Ahh, you mean clothing made ahead of time? You're so young, but you use some hard words. You can buy those on Tepta Boulevard, but it's a little pricey!"

Tepta Boulevard? I search for it on the Map. Seems like it's some distance from here, but I'll mark it on the Map for now.

"Thanks, after going around the stalls, I will head to Tepta Boulevard for a look!"

"Oh right! Let me show you around! Mom! There aren't a lot of customers today, can I go?"

Ooh, show me around? How nice!

To have a local guide for shopping at the open-air market, it's quite exciting.

Even though the madam warned over and over for us to come back before prep for dinner starts, she let us go in the end.

Though I am a customer, for her to let her daughter go out alone with a strange man, seems a little careless—No, I don't like to admit it, but she might have thought that I'm the harmless type. Yeah, that's more likely.

In high school, girls I was friends with always told me: "Suzuki is a nice guy!"

No, I have to stop opening up old wounds.

Martha-chan brings me to East Boulevard, where there are various stalls lined up along a five hundred-meter wide area. Each store only about half a *jou*. Is it my imagination? There is a slight smell of soy sauce.

"A lot of stores are closed!"

"Ah~ That section sells food, or produce from nearby villages, so they're closed past noon."

Apparently the stores that sell food will show up at several different places around sundown.

The stores selling clothes are at the back of the area, so I head in that direction while browsing the other stores with Martha, seems like not all stores that sell foodstuff are closed.

Next to Martha-chan who's checking out sculpted wooden hairpins, I notice an old woman talking to an old man at the next stall, so I listened in with Enhanced Hearing.

"How much for three Gabo berries?"

"Three for two Micros."

"So much, they're only worth one no?"

"Lady, I'll lose money at that price, how about four for two Micro coins?"

"Five for two Micros."

"Alright, since lady is a beauty, let's go with that!"

Haggling is necessary, huh. I'm used to buying things at label price, so haggling feels like a pain. By the way, the Gabo berry is a fist-sized root vegetable that looks like a pumpkin dyed red. ⁴

The odd name Micro coin intrigued me, so I take one out from Storage for a look, and it turns out to be a rusted, square brass coin weighing about a gram.

Martha-chan shows me a hairpin with a waterfowl-design on her hair.

"How is it? Look good?"

"Yeah, very much!"

"How does it compare to this one?"

Hehehe, I knew she would ask that!

I trained for this in college! I know that in such an occasion, telling it straight is no good. Instead, I have to choose the one that the girl likes more, based on her own reaction.

Otherwise, it'll take forever to shop.

"I think the turquoise one is better, it suits Martha's hair more."

"Really, you think so?"

"Then it's yours for just three Coppers!"

Maybe the store owner thought we would buy it, and he immediately announces the price.

"Sorry, I'll buy it during the harvest festival later this year, my pocket money isn't enough right now."

Oh? I thought she would ask me to pay for it, looks like Martha-chan is a humble one. Due to my ex-girlfriend's training in college, I was going to buy it for her regardless.

I want to try haggling anyway, might as well do it as thanks for being my guide.

"Can you sell for one Copper?"

"That won't even pay for labor. Two Coppers at least."

When I started negotiating the price, Martha-chan probably thought it was unfair for me to pay, so she pulls my sleeve and says meekly: "No, it's

fine.” but I stop her with a wave. Judging by the exchange rates I’ve seen so far, five Micro should be one Copper, and five coppers should equal one Large Copper.

“One copper and two Micros.”

“I want one Copper and four.”

“One Copper and three Micros, okay?”

“Fine, sold.”

I take out the exact change from my pocket to pay. Receiving the hairpin, I affix it on Martha’s hair. It feels kinda like going to Summer Festivals with the kids of my relatives.

>>> Skill obtained: “Haggling”.

>>> Skill obtained: “Evaluation”.

>>> Skill obtained: “Negotiation”.

Thanks to the successful haggle, I gained a lot of skills. They seem very convenient, so I add skill points and enable them.

“Ehehe, thanks, Satou-san.”

“It’s nothing, just a sign of gratitude for being my guide.”

I should butter her up with compliments right now, if I wanted to court her. I merely politely answer the abashed Martha, since I’m no lolicon, I’ll hold back for now, not crossing the line.

By the effect of the now-enabled Evaluation skill, when I look at an item, the AR will display the market price, showing a range of two to four Coppers, which is probably the typical price.

Anyway, there sure are a lot of kids working!

“What’s going on, Satou-san?”

“Oh, I was thinking that there a lot of kids.”

“They’re servants and house maids.”

“Eh~ They’re quite diligent for kids.”

“Huh? Isn’t it common?”

With an incredulous expression that seems to be sincere, Martha-chan

stares at me who feels respect for the kids. You mean people start working this young?

Oh, oh! There they are!

Between the gaps of the crowd, I spot some cat ears twitching. Definitely beastkin!

Most of the beastkin are on the west side, so I haven't seen any of them!

Sound of scolding comes, forcefully cutting off my excitement.

"How dirty, don't come to the east side with that savage appearance."

A young man in a tunic kicks a the Dog Ear kid unsteadily carrying a large burden.

The Dog Ear Tribe girl falls to the ground, dropping the lumber she was carrying all over.

Her ears drooping low, she fearfully looks at the man who kicked her. The Cat Ear Tribe girl together with her immediately runs over, desperately apologizing.

"What did these kids do?"

"Wha?! Are these your slaves?! Tie them down and keep them in the west side!"

How unlike me, to intervene without thinking. But seeing the catkin girl apologize, it was impossible for me to stand by.

Seriously, I was worried about how to deal with this, but thankfully the man leaves without another word.

I pick up the lumber that the Dog Ear Tribe girl dropped.

"Lumber."

"Gi-, give back, give back."

Did they think I was going to take the lumber? The Dog Ear Tribe and the Cat Ear Tribe girls look up at me. The Dog Ear Tribe girl seems to be too afraid to say "Give it back", stuttering like a broken record.

I tie up the lumber with a rope in my backpack before returning it to them.

"You two alright?"

“Yea.”

“We’re fine, *nano desu*.” ⁵

“I see, there are a lot of people on the main road, so be careful!”

After sending off the two who keeps thanking me, turning around, I see Martha-chan standing there with a gentle expression.

“What is it?”

“Well, you were so kind to the beastkin...”

Hmm? They were really cute no?

Although they do need some makeup and a bath, I think they will turn out to be very pretty.

“In this city, are beastkin hated?”

“Yeah, I heard that hunters and villagers who came to sell produce were often murdered by beastkin back in the day.”

You mean they’re like bandits or savages?

“Ah, look there.”

Changing the topic, Martha-chan finds something interesting, and pulls me that way. I stop pondering, and follow her lead. There are small animals being sold in cages.

The seller is a man wearing a leather vest who appears to be a hunter. He is carrying a small axe on his waist.

Speaking of which, there aren’t many people on the street who are carrying swords. The only people that do are ones who look like guards or gang members. Outside of that, people at most only carry tools as long as short swords in their belt.

Since swords are surprisingly heavy, if it’s carried on the belt, it will pull down clothes, and cause shoulder aches.

“Hey, they’re cute!”

“They look delicious no?”

Martha-chan’s opinion of the caged animals and mine, are apples to oranges.

Probably embarrassed to have put her appetite first, Martha-chan fakes a

cough with an “Ahem” and pulls me to the next stall by my arm.

Looks like she want to pretend that nothing happened.

Before getting to the clothing section, I bought a mug, a comb, soap, a chew stick and so on. A chew stick is made from the dried root of some plant, and I have to chew on that before rinsing my teeth, since there isn't anything like toothbrushes or dental floss.

I also didn't see any glass products, only items processed from quartz or other jewels.

I think I've learned how to shop here.

For some reason, If I start at the market price, people don't seem to respond well. At the third store or so I begin to catch on. Starting the negotiation with at half of the market value, then work towards it after three or four calls works nicely. I'm okay with doing this occasionally, but it's too much of a hassle.

There is a group of people gathered at a square in the middle of the East Boulevard.

“O the faithful men and women of Seiryuu City! The Demon King will revive soon! You all saw it! That Starfall, is definitely the harbinger of chaos! Come, those who are faithful, it is nigh time to come to the valiant Zaikuon Temple!”

Dressed in holy robes, a thirty-something arrogant-looking obese man is barking out his sermon. The crowd listening lost interest in the middle and dispersed.

“What's going on there?”

“That's the Chief Priest of Zaikuon. Seems like he's working hard because his congregants are decreasing.”

“Hmm~ did he do something?”

“No, they decreased because he couldn't do anything.”

I am completely lost, and sensing my confusion, Martha-chan adds on.

“Thing is, among the clergy at Zaikuon Temple, there aren't any who can use Holy Magic. If you want to contribute to a temple, it's better to choose

ones that can heal your injuries like Parion and Garleon.”

I see, so it’s pettiness, or maybe utilitarianism. Unlike normal religions, ones with real-world benefits are bound to gather believers.

The Fat Chief Priest is so desperate, he starts pulling on the people leaving. The regular priests are trying to stop him, and to avoid getting involved, I walk past them and leave.

The clothing sector not only has stores that sell second-hand clothes, but also numerous ones that patch up and adjust clothing. I find a stall hidden among the second-hand stores that actually sells new items, so I purchase some underwear.

It was also selling towels, so I tried to pick some out that’s made of good material. They turn out to be all made of two layers of cloth sewn together, so I was a bit miffed.

But it’s troublesome not to have any towels, so I buy ones of different sizes.

Compared to food or lodging, textile is a little more pricey.

“Look, Satou-san. It’s a dragon mask!”

Martha-chan puts on one of the masks displayed at a stall. It’s a carved wooden mask. Various other masks are also being sold, like an expressionless silver one, a white one, and so on.

“These masks, they’re worn during the harvest festival! The silver one was very popular last year.”

Oh~ I pick up a silver mask, which seems to be fastened with a rope.

“What do you think, young man? It’s a dragon mask that stands for safety and prosperity!”

The lady at the stall tells me about the mask. She’s the twenty-something female store owner. She’s wearing a V-neck, so I don’t know where to look. She’s definitely not my type, nor is she that beautiful, but my eyes are drawn there by instinct.

To divert my own attention, I ask about the wigs sold next to the masks.

“Is this worn with the dragon mask?”

“The dragon mask is only for people playing the dragon. The black wig is for those playing the hero, while the blond one is for the one playing the hero’s servant or the princess!”

Oh, I see, it’s a festival with various role-playing.

In the end, following her advice, I bought the silver mask and the blond wig.



There are several stores that sell clothing on Tepta Boulevard.

First, in the store for travelers, I buy a waterproof cape with a hood that can protect me from the weather. I also purchase several sets of shorts and shirts that look well-made.

For shoes I pick out a pair of sturdy, waterproof traveling shoes that matches my robe, as well as a pair of sandals.

For sandals, the popular style is one that is affixed by Ancient Greek-style knots, but I want something I can wear indoors, so I ask for a custom pair from the shoe-maker in the store.

While I wait for the shoes to be ready, I discover a bag that looks very similar to my Garage Bag.

I eagerly check the market price thinking I hit jackpot, but it seems to be a regular leather bag, which disappoints me.

But, seems like I can use it as a substitute for the Garage Bag, so I buy it. The color of the leather and the hems are a little different, but as long as they're not compared side by side it should be okay.

I kinda bought too much. It's hard to carry everything.

"Excuse me, while I am shopping, may I leave some things here?"

"Yes, of course! If you wish, we can also deliver to your residence, how about it?"

"Ah, please do. Address it to Satou at the Gateside Inn."

Fortunately since I bought a lot, they aren't charging for delivery.

Their service is really good!

Perhaps the child of the store, a boy about ten years old takes the clothes from the clerk and goes to deliver it.

I pick out street clothes in the next store.

Even though what I'm wearing now are top-notch magical items, looking at the clothes people wear and those in stores, it's a bit out of style.

"How about this robe? It makes you look imposing!"

"A little too big I think."

"In that case, how is this waistcoat?"

For a while now, the two twenty-something female clerks have been trying to sell me more expensive than suitable items. Is it a honeypot? They've been pushing their bodies against me, which I do like, but their perfume is too strong, so my enjoyment of it is halved.

"Hey, hey, Satou-san, doesn't this waistcoat fit better?"

"Yeah, that's good! But the orange lining looks ridiculous."

"That will fall off in two or three years, so it's fine!"

Two or three years? I question that in my head, but maybe that's normal in this country.

Outside of jackets and suits, I basically buy new clothing every season.

Waistcoats are essentially form-fitting shirts with a high waist.

The waistcoats at Seiryuu City have openings going from elbow height to the shoulder, letting people see inside. There are various styles, with the opening going only to the shoulders or to the torso.

Judging from what I've seen on the way here, it seems to be clothing for playboys.

"This one is in this year's trendiest color!"

"That's right, I strongly recommend this color!"

The shirt the clerks are recommending costs about three times more than the clothes Martha-chan showed me. There is no label, so I used the Evaluation skill, which can't make a mistake.

Other than the strange shoulder decorations, it's in an awfully paired green and pink, so I firmly reject it.

Yeah, let's give up on this store.

I ignore the grumbling clerks, and head to the next store.

Two stores over, there is a shop displaying some fashionable robes, so I decide to check it out.

Rather than men's clothing, the store is actually selling proper clothing fit for merchants.

"Hmm~ everything looks expensive, but also very pretty!"

"Yeah, they're also very well-made, looks like a good store."

“Thank you very much. They’re nothing compared to the Yuriha fiber robe okyaku-sama is wearing, yet I am still confident that my products are the best among ready-made clothing.”

The young male store owner confidently makes his pitch. Well, I would buy it even without the talk.

“If you want to have something custom-made, my parents run a men’s clothing store on Central Boulevard, and I’m sure once you pay a visit, you will find products suitable to your tastes.”

Hmm~ Both the generations are in the same business but each has their own store? Perhaps he has the talent for it, or maybe he’s apprenticing at another store.

I buy a fashionable robe in white with silver embroidering, as well as a merchant-style dark-brown robe at this store. There is also no charge for delivery. It really reminds me of the forest-related internet retailer. ⁶

I did get to buy everything I wanted, but I am really curious about the tailor in Central Boulevard, so I decide to see it with Martha-chan.

Immediately upon entering, a kind-looking middle-aged couple welcomes us.

Unlike the stores that sell readymade clothing, this store doesn’t have many products on display. Only five sample designs and cloths are laid out on some platforms, and there are two sets of tables for consultations that takes up half the store.

“Excuse me, I am looking for a sturdy, merchant-like robe in conservative colors.”

“Welcome, please have a seat, I will bring you the cloth samples. The five designs on display there are recent best-sellers.”

The man guides me to the conference table, and goes into the back for samples.

Without missing a beat, the woman serves us black tea.

Sitting straight up next to me, Martha-chan, for once, has become a meek kitten, quietly drinking her tea.

“Since it’s going to become colder, how about this thicker material? If you are going to travel, we can also make a waterproof jacket that matches the robe, would you like that?”

Their work is really something, probably.

I’m the kind of guy who buys multiple colors of the same style at clothing stores like *Ounishiro*⁷, so I ordered the five best-selling designs and their corresponding jackets. It will take five days to complete everything.

Eight Gold is a significantly high price, but I do have a lot of unearned capital, so I make the purchase without question.

“Amazing, Satou-san. Merchants sure are rich!”

“A merchant’s clothing is like a knight’s weapon and armor. Being stingy about it is no good.”

Somehow I sound like an OL who lives by group dates.

In reality, when I go check out the high-class sector on the other side of the inner wall, if I don’t dress according to the TPO⁸, it wouldn’t feel right.

By the way, the magical robe I’m wearing now, its market price is about one hundred Gold coins, so like in most games, magical items have significantly higher prices.

The tailored clothes will be delivered to my place after they’re done, but the rough stitches will be complete in three days, so in order to make proper adjustments, I will have to come in again.

The store owner couple sees us off.

Even the street we’re on, everything is cleaner than the European fantasy town I had in mind.

No animal droppings on the ground, nor any homeless people in the alleys.

There is even sewage with stone covers running along the streets.

Though such things should be a given inside a game, if this were not a dream but another world, I think that compared to the level of civilization, the concept of sanitation is quite advanced.

Unlike the Eastern Boulevard, open-air shops are sparse on the Central

Boulevard, and instead there are many regular stores lined up. The people walking around also look better dressed.

There is a man selling candy on the way home, so Martha-chan and I buy some. It isn't an overly hard candy, but a stick with caramel-colored molasses on one end, and seems to be called malt candy.

As I suck on the candy walking down the road, I watch the people and carriages scurrying about.

The main source of mobility comes from horses and people, so does that mean it's not convenient to use magic as a replacement for machinery?

Anyway, most of the people pulling carts are wearing collars.

"Are collars fashionable?"

"Huh? Ah, they're slaves! Enslaving collars are only put on slaves that resist or criminals, while normal slaves wear regular collars to indicate their status."

With candy in her mouth, Martha-chan answers me.

I see, so that's why.

One of the carriages pass in front of us. Perhaps due to the crowd, the carriage slows down to a fast walking pace. I see about a dozen female slaves with collars riding on the wagon.

I check out one of them.

The girl, who looks exhausted from the long journey, has black hair and black eyes, a Yamato Nadeshiko type of Japanese face. Among so many European faces, it's the first time I see an Asian one.

Since that girl is looking down, there is no dramatic development after our eyes meet or anything, but I do trade looks with the fully European young girl with light purple flowing locks.

For some reason, the girl is staring this way completely astounded.

Stop, I feel uncomfortable if you look at me so passionately like that... I'm sorry, I don't have a thing for lolis.

After looking at the little girl for some time, her name and level pops up next to her.

Arisa, Level 10. A high level for a little girl.

More data is added.

Eleven years old.

Titles: “The Witch who Doomed the Kingdom”, “The Insane Princess”.

Skills: Unknown.

At this time, the carriage turns the corner, and disappears into Western Boulevard.

Titles clearly asking for trouble... No, I will not go near her.

Absolutely not!



“Welcome back, Martha-san.”

Having returned to the Gateside Inn, we are greeted by a primary school-aged girl.

I thought she was Martha-chan’s little sister at first, but a little sister wouldn’t call her “Martha-san”. Is she the young maid I heard about before?

“I’m back, Yuni. This is Satou-san, our guest starting today!」

“I welcome your return, Satou-sama. your luggage has been moved to your room.”

“Oh, thank you, it was hard carrying all that luggage, wasn’t it?”

As I say that, I pat Yuni’s head. She’s so young, but she’s a lot more polite than Martha.

I don’t know if it’s customary to give tips here, but I give her a Micro coin as the luggage fee. Martha-chan is saying “How nice”, so the amount is probably fine.

“Oh right! Martha-san, it was amazing!”

“What was it?”

“There were some carriages transporting meat!”

“Meat? Um, you don’t mean wyvern meat?”

Yuni-chan excitedly goes up to Martha-chan with her hands flailing, but Martha-chan only frowned in distaste.

“Yeah! It was soo~ big, it had to be carried on many carriages!」

Yuni stands up on tiptoes when she says “soo~”, and her arms shake trying to reach upwards to convey the height, and when she says “big” she spreads out her arms to the side to show width.

What’s with this girl, so cute.

That’s probably the wyvern cut up by the army that arrived right?

“Is wyvern meat that exciting?”

“Yes, since after the soldiers defeat a wyvern, Count-sama will give the meat to our orphanage! It’s meat! Meat! Ah, I haven’t had any for months~”

In response, Yuni answered my question like a child from Showa Period.

“But, I don’t like how wyvern meat tastes. Western Boulevard smells because of that...”

In a fortress city like this, not everyone gets to eat meat. The difference in her reaction and Martha-chan’s, must be the difference between the classes that do get meat and those that don’t,

“Anyways, look, Yuni. Isn’t it cute?”

“Wow~ it’s so small and cute!”

Martha-chan stops talking about the wyvern, and showing off the hairpin I bought for her to Yuni-chan, starts up a chatter.

I should probably return to my room, but I want to find out if there’s a bathhouse first.

Seeing the high standards of sanitation in this city, I can probably expect a bathhouse with a sauna.

“There’s a public bathhouse inside the citadel, but it’s not for us commoners. Only the nobles and those rich enough to have a house inside can use it.”

Ugh, so close, yet so far? You need social status to take a bath!

Feudal society, I won’t give up easily.

“Bummer! Then where do you go to wash yourselves, Martha-chan?”

“The well in the back, that’s where we wash! Since it’s colder right now, we wash ourselves about once per decade. It’s easy to get a cold washing

outside mid-winter, so we wash inside with heated water when the time comes, but right now it's too luxurious to do that."

Ensuring fuel to burn in this fortress city isn't easy right?

Looking at the map, there's only a small stream nearby, so the only source of water is underground

A decade is a unit of ten days, and each month is divided into three: first decade, middle decade, and last decade. They don't have weeks, nor do they name each day, so a decade is as close as it gets.

As I learn from the idle chatter, new customers come in.

"Hey, Martha, you have empty rooms right?"

"Welcome! Yes, we do!"

The people who came are two middle-aged men dressed like merchants, and a twenty- to thirty-year-old blonde beauty. I signal to Martha-chan who is busy with customers that I am going back to my room, and since I don't actually know which one, I have Yuni-chan guide me.

The room is small and simple, about four and a half *jou*, and only has a bed, a table, and a chair.

I ask Yuni-chan whether I can wash inside my room, but I was denied because getting the room too humid will make it smell moldy.

Right, makes sense..

All the clothing I bought are all placed on the bed, so I pick out a change of clothing and head down with toiletries.

When I walk out, I see the customers Martha-chan was serving walking into their rooms. The two men share one room, but the woman seems to have her own. So she's not married to either?

I go through the wooden gate Yuni-chan told me about, and go out the back.

The backyard is about eight *jou*. The well is not far from the door, and it's not a pump, but an old-school stone well. There are two wooden buckets hanging on the wall, so I take one to get water.

I thought it would be a lot of effort, but perhaps due to my high STR

(strength), I easily pull up the full bucket.

However, there's only a short fence separating the backyard and the alley.

Even if there aren't many people around, it's not none, doesn't it feel weird to wash like this?

I look around, and see a divider near the door.

Aha! Do I use this?

I set the divider where it's impossible to see from the other end of the alley, and start washing. The divider only goes up to my waist, but it's sufficient to hide the important parts.

I rinse my hair, washing out the the sand and dirt, then use the soap I bought to clean my body. The soap is surprisingly fragrant, and doesn't stimulate my skin. Maybe I only feel that way because of my high VIT (endurance).

I really want shampoo and conditioner, but I make do with soap to wash my hair. There isn't much foam, but dirt really does come out. I've always used shampoo, so this is the first time I wash my hair with soap.

Hearing a squeak behind me, I turn around.

A woman comes through the open back door. It's the female customer from earlier.

For some reason, we match gazes.

She nods slightly as a greeting, then gets water from the well.

Wha~?

There's a naked man washing himself right here, yet she's calmly pulling up her bucket. She's not hiding embarrassment at all, just plain out ignoring me.

After getting water, the woman slowly sets down her divider, undresses and starts washing.

Huh?

Is this for real? Aren't you a little too bold?

Even if there's a divider between us, even if! 9

Each time she moves, her upper body!

Well, her things, which I guess are about D-cup, are bouncing around and asserting their presence.

Her hand is covering the front, but they still get defenselessly exposed sometimes...

Wait no, I'm not a DT¹⁰ anymore, I need to pull back my awestruck face, and go back to washing myself.

O my energetic lower half, control yourself!

I peek at the woman's face, and she's making a calm face with a hint of a smirk!

Wow, mature women are quite something!!

...The age I see on the AR is smaller than mine.

Alright, I got an eyeful, but loitering around after I finished washing could be mistaken for having criminal intent, so let's go!

I quickly dry myself with a towel... Where do I dump the water?

Are there even sewers here?

"Just dump the water under the tree over there, sewage seems to run under it."

Perhaps noticing my uneasiness, the woman tells me. After thanking her, I dump the water and go back to my room.

I snuck a look when I turned around, but don't judge me, it's a man's instincts.

Back in my room, I change into the brown robe I just bought.

I already put on underwear when I washed, so I just wear the robe. And now I realize that I forgot to buy socks.

I don't like my feet all moist, so I change into straw sandals. They're comfortable as expected.

I always wear flip-flops at work, so wearing shoes for too long feels weird.

A good smell is coming from downstairs, it's probably time for dinner right?

Let's go to the bathroom before dinner, which is not in each room, but a shared bathroom.

Rather than a squatting toilet, the bathroom here is actually more like an old-school outhouse. I never saw one before, even at my grandfather's in the country, so it feels fantastical in a sense.

I feel no joy about this though.

After doing my business I look for toilet paper, which of course doesn't exist. Thinking there would be paper like what was used for the guestbook, I was a little hopeful, but is it too much to ask for after all?

I discover a pile of hay within hand's reach after looking around.

I have to use that?

Seems like my butt will feel uncomfortable after, so I rip up one of the towels I bought and use that. It's a little wasteful, but now's not the time to be frugal.

Even though I experienced a strange culture shock, I was able to wipe myself clean, so I won't complain.

The tavern at ground floor is filled with delicious smells and a cheery atmosphere.

It's a little dim inside, but several lanterns are hanging from the ceiling and on the pillars, lighting up the place, appropriately fantastical, not bad!

"Ah, Satou-san, I was wondering whether I should go get you!"]

Martha-chan, holding a tray while scurrying back and forth between tables, notices me, and brings me to an empty seat.

"Thanks. I'll have whatever you recommend for dinner."

"Today, there was a hunter who brought in a large boar, so I recommend pork chop. A bit pricy, but you ought to try it!"

"Oh! It's really the best! Bro, you won't regret eating it ya know?:

The large number of customers is probably due to the pork.

Even without the drunk patron's recommendation, my belly is already

craving for pork chops.

“Then, I would like the pork chops and a vegetable dish.”

“What do you want to drink?”

“Tea or juice, or milk if you don’t have those.”

“Huh? We only have water and hard beverages!”

Oh right, this is a tavern after all! It would be bad if I get bellyaches from untreated water though!

“Then, please give me something light and smooth.”

“Is watered-down cider okay? If you are okay with something more expensive, mead and wine are both pretty good diluted.”

Is cider brewed with apple juice? Just like wine, it can easily go sour if you’re not careful!

The mead that would often appear in fantasy works, is brewed from honey.

Speaking of which, I don’t think I’ve ever had it.

“Please give me mead.”

“Sure thing~ Then, please wait a bit! It will be ready soon~”

Martha-chan gracefully dodges the hands of the drunk patrons reaching for her butt, and heads to the kitchen to deliver my order. Trying to put their hands on the butt of a middle-school-aged girl, are they all lolicons?

While waiting for my food, I look around.

Men wearing merchant robes or nice tunics are merrily enjoying the meat, and drinking a beer-like foamy alcohol, is that ale?

I realize that there’s something strange about the patrons.

Huh? What is it? It’s not much different from a tavern scene in a fantasy film at first glance.

Right! Tobacco!

There are no ashtrays on the tables, nor smoke drifting around. At most, there’s only the steam from hot food.

Now that I think about it, I didn’t see anyone smoking cigarettes or pipes when I shopped.

Are cigarettes uncommon in this country?

It's a friendly country for someone like me who despises smoking, but for a chain smoker like Fat Guy, he probably wouldn't last three days.

Martha-chan comes back with the steamy, hot pork chop on a tray.

"Thanks for waiting~"

"Looks delicious!"

I'm not just being polite, it really looks delicious. This meal alone is the same price as three days worth of lodging.

In the main dish, the pork chop is diced into small pieces, served with a white blob that seems to be mashed potatoes.

There are fried garlic and dried basil on top of the pork chop, bringing out the appetizing fragrance of the pork.

Next to it is a bowl full of what appears to be consommé.¹¹

On the bottom of the soup there are orange, red, green, and yellow vegetables diced into one-centimeter cubes. Since the colors are so carefully picked, I think the taste is also worth it.

Mead fills a mug made of baked clay.

Finally, there's a basket of rye bread sliced into two-centimeter pieces. I can taste the fantasy fiction classic at last, o great rye bread!

"Enjoy while it's hot~"

Maybe I looked interesting surveying the food with my eyes, Martha-chan informs me with a cheery voice before going back to work.

Alright, shall we try the soup?

Dipping the slightly too big spoon into the bowl, I feel some resistance, suggesting the soup was thickened.

Picking up the vegetables that are not overcooked, I put the spoon in my mouth.

The soup itself, as its appearance suggests, is similar to consommé. The content is fully cooked, and didn't show any resistance when I bite down, spreading the sweet taste of vegetables in my mouth.

Perhaps because the soup was thickened, my belly warms up after

swallowing it. It's probably a winter favorite.

Then, next up is the main course pork chop.

I put a piece in my mouth with the fork, and unlike the pork I've had before, the taste of it isn't as strong. Not very fat, and a bit gamy, and as I chew, a wild, impactful flavor nothing like pork spreads in my mouth.

Before the pork is gone from my mouth, I take a bite of the rye bread. A bit tough, but not as hard as everyone says. Even the crunch from chewing it feels nice.

It tastes a bit sour, but by eating it with meat, when I swallow, it mixes with the sweetness of the meat, creating an unbearably luscious taste. It's so good that I keep eating without pause.

Everything is so tasty. There is a lot of good food in this country, which makes me glad. A gourmet tour of the Shiga Kingdom, sounds quite exciting.

Finishing the five hundred gram or so pork chop, I take a sip of the mead, a honey-colored alcohol, that I had totally forgotten about.

I was expecting a thick honey-like texture, likely because it was diluted, it is smooth and easy to down. It's not the poor-quality alcohol I expected it to be.

As I down the mead as if to lick it all clean, Martha-chan comes by.

"Ahh, have you finished?"

"Yeah, it was delicious!"

"If you still have room, how about some bone-in meat or cartilage to go with the mead?"

Hmm, I can still eat more, why not?

"Ah yes, please do. Another cup of mead too."

"Sure thing~ Just one moment!"

Watching Martha-chan leave, I enjoy the mead while looking around, and discover the beauty I saw by the well before standing at the entrance looking troubled, without a place to go.

The tavern had already become full, and she seems to be looking for a seat. Or maybe she's looking for the merchants she came in with.

Noticing me, she smiles and comes to my table.

"May I sit across from you?"

"Please, go ahead."

Rejecting a beauty who wants to sit across from me is impossible.

Recalling what happened at the well just now is a little awkward, but I try to keep a straight face.

>>> Obtained skill: "Pokerface".

The message appears in the corner of my sight, and as if trying to break some record, I add points to it.

Martha, who has now noticed her sitting down, comes over to take the order. When she was looking for a seat, Martha-chan was in the kitchen with my order and didn't see her.

"Let's see, I don't really want meat. Vegetable soup and bread is fine, and ale, please."

"Alright, it will be ready soon."

Martha's sales pitch of the pork is ineffective to the woman, who seems to be a vegetarian, so she goes back to the kitchen bummed.

"There aren't many guests lodging, but the tavern looks packed."

"Yeah, the food is delicious, I can see why they're busy!"

"Ehehe~, thanks. I'll tell dad about it later!"

Here to deliver the vegetable soup, rye bread, and ale that the beauty ordered, Martha-chan makes a sheepish grin at my compliment, though the cook is her father.

"Satou-san's order will be ready in a moment, so have this, and please wait"

Martha, saying that it's on the house, puts down a plate of the sauerkraut-like pickled vegetable I had at lunch on the table.

The beauty says "I'll go ahead" and starts eating. She slowly submerges the rye bread in the vegetable soup, and spooning the soup from above.

Ahh, is that how it's eaten?

“What?”

“Sorry, I was being rude. I just didn’t know how rye bread is usually eaten, so I couldn’t help it.”

So I can’t conceal my line of sight even with Pokerface?

“It’s fine. So are you from the Capital or the Duchy?”

“No, I come from a faraway country.”

Does the staple food differ from place to place?

And I know what a Capital is, but what’s a Duchy?

“Do they not eat rye bread in the Capital or the Duchy?”

“Well, the commoners eat rye bread, but the nobles and wealthy merchants at the Capital all eat white bread. As for the Duchy, the staple food there is a grain called rice, and they don’t seem to eat much bread.”

Ooh~ There are also places that eat rice?

Let’s check it out when I crave for rice! I normally eat too much junk food and ramen, and don’t really have rice that much.

Right, should I ask about the Principality?

As she bites down on the rye bread softened by the soup, I asked her about it.

“It’s the territory of Duke Ooyugock. It’s supposedly the first capital when Shiga Kingdom was founded.”

“Whoa~ An ancient city? I want to go see.”

“Yeah, it’s next to a river, so it’s probably a beautiful place!”

Hoho, sounds good! The night sky reflected upon the river, that will definitely be an amazing sight.

“Satou-san, thanks for waiting~”

“Ooh, smells great!”

On the plate with a wavy pattern, there are five pieces of bone-in meat lined up.

Are these ribs? Looking at the other patrons eating, looks like I have to hold one and bite the meat off the bones. Looks like my hands and face will definitely be covered by grease. I pull out a handkerchief bought with my

clothes on the table.

I am sitting across from a beauty, so doing my best to avoid drooling, I take a bite.

It likely isn't cooked in a pressure pot, but the meat is easily separated from the bone. Looking at the other patrons struggling, maybe Martha-chan chose the good parts for me.

Wiping my fingers on my handkerchief, I take a drink of the mead, oh yeah, that's the stuff.

I see the beauty's throat gulp down.

I wasn't staring on purpose, since I only noticed because my wandering eyes landed on her collarbone.

Don't tell me, she's not vegetarian, but didn't order meat only because she couldn't afford it?

"If you don't mind, want to try one?"

I try to make the offer, and after her face brightens up in delight, she hesitates for a bit, but in the end, her reservation beaten by her appetite, she takes a piece, murmuring "Well, if you say so."

Despite being a graceful beauty, when she starts on the rib, she gorges it all silently, and it pleases me to see her enjoy it.

The way she licked the grease off of her fingers afterwards is very alluring.

Since she doesn't seem to have a handkerchief, I quietly slide mine laying on the table her way. She takes it after thanking me, and wipes her fingers.

Doesn't look like that was enough, so I offer her more meat while we chat.

She was born here in Seiryuu City, married a merchant, lived at the Capital until recently, and when her husband passed away, she returned home.

The merchants who came in with her were her husband's acquaintances, who let her come back to Seiryuu City with the caravans. We talk about various topics like this.

I asked for more food and alcohol from Martha, and enjoyed listening to her stories about the Capital.

Right, what now.

As we drank, I listened to her stories about the Capital and the journey from there to Seiryuu City, but I made two miscalculations.

Due to my high level, my body seems to be able to take a lot of alcohol. So even though I was a little tipsy, I sobered up easily.

The Skills tab somehow had the new addition “Alcohol Resistance”. Probably because it was only diluted mead, I didn’t get any drinking-related title.

The other miscalculation, well, the beauty drinking with me, is now blacked out drunk on the table.

If this were a college get-together, it would be a great opportunity to bring her home. but taking advantage of a woman who had just lost her husband isn’t something I do.

When Martha-chan is free, I ask her to guide me to the woman’s room and put her in bed. If I did a princess carry, I wouldn’t be able to go up the narrow stairs, so I hoisted her on my back.

“Satou-san, what a gentleman!”

“This is nothing.”

After Martha-chan compliments me, I say goodnight and return to my room.

The feeling on my back was heavenly.

After putting away my robe in Storage I tackle the bed.

Whew, this hotel is the best! The food is good, the bed is clean, the employee are cute, the next room over is a beauty. The service was so good I can’t imagine this is a dream.

Even though the bed is so unexpectedly comfortable it make me sleepy, I had too much fun chatting with the beauty earlier, and can’t quite fall asleep. Before clocking out, I inadvertently recall everything I have gone

through so far in this dream.

—Defeating dragons and lizardmen with Meteor Shower.

I didn't see the dragons, but the lizardmen appeared so real it would make American animators cry. Even the lizardman language was so detailed, my dream sure was detailed.

—The battle between the army and the wyvern.

The fight between Zena's peers and the wyvern, was so intense it could be used in a fantasy RPG promotional video.

The poor wyvern is probably in Yuni's stomach by now.

—The streets of Seiryuu City and its people.

After arriving at Seiryuu City, I was surprised by how realistic the town looked and how varied the way people dressed.

Thinking about it, the clothing that varies based on class and profession, with details like patches and shoe stains, is so colorful and vivid I can't really call it a dream. Really wish Metabo-shi would put that kind of effort into the specs.

—Lastly the dinner just now.

The mead which I had for the first time was delicious, and the pork chop also tasted amazing. To say that they paired excellently with the rye bread I tried, wouldn't be an overstatement. I've never even had meat like that in Japan.

In my dream, is nothing impossible?

Unknown scenery and languages, and even unknown tastes combine into a—huh?

...I was already subconsciously aware, but truthfully, calling this a dream is ridiculous.

When did I start to feel the dissonance?

The realistic town, the appearance and behavior of the people I met, almost nothing is consistent with any stories or games I know of.

I've also never heard of the Chevalier title Zena mentioned, which seems

to be different from Viscount. Too many things like this Chevalier matter were beyond the limits of my knowledge.

The most obvious examples are the Ancient Reptilian and Shiga Languages.

Even though I was once young and delusional, I've never created a language from scratch. At most, it was only a mishmash of known languages on Earth.

And the food just now.

The quiche at lunch was something I've had before, so its taste is within the limits of my imagination, but I didn't know how mead tasted, and if I can conjure up that juicy pork in my head, I might as well keep staying in dream world.

Therefore, finding out the cause of this situation will be on hold, since there is insufficient data for a meaningful answer. Though I'm not absolutely certain this is not a dream, for the time being, let's call this a game-like fantasy world!

The plan right now, I think I'll go with enjoying this world before finding a way home.

Sightseeing comes first, searching for a way back second.

Of course, I do want to return to ordinary everyday life, but this extraordinary life is hard to come by. I want to have some fun, for spiritual fuel as a game developer.

As for work, FFL is already released, and WW only needs adjustments. The documentation is all there, so Metabo-shi should be able to do something about it.

I might be fired for going AWOL, but thankfully the seniors who left before owe me. I shouldn't have any trouble looking for my next job.

As for my private life, my girlfriend dumped me long ago, and my parents are quite healthy, living peacefully with my older sister and her husband. My family is very easy-going, so even if they know I'm missing, they wouldn't worry too much.

My little sister might be angry with me, but she's a heartless bastard who will cheerfully take my Tokyo apartment all by herself, so she'll probably calm down once I say I brought back a gift.

On the off chance I can't return, I probably won't have any issues in daily life, and only Demon Kings and Gods would pose any threat.

If I live modestly, they shouldn't be bored enough to come make trouble, so let's enjoy sightseeing!

Spamming Meteor Shower before was the exact opposite though, and I'm afraid that might have raised the flag for me to become a Great Demon King. With that said, I really do want to avoid committing more genocides like that.

Peace is best after all.

Chapter 4: Date

「Satou here,

Though younger girls always get attached to me, we would only remain as friends, never becoming lovers. For some reason, girls I am interested in are invariably older.」

I am awakened by an unreserved knocking.

「Mr. Satou, are you awake?」

「Yeah, I am.」

The morning light shines through the crevices on the closed window. There is only one in the room, but it's only large enough to poke your head through and doesn't even have glass. Oh yeah, I thought it might be for ventilation, but Martha told me to shut it at night to be safe.

I quickly groom myself, and walk to the door.

Even after a whole night, my facial hair didn't grow.

I do remember not having facial hair at fifteen, and when my mustache grew in after starting college, I ecstatically showed off to everyone.

My girlfriend at the time immediately shaved it, however.

My hair isn't standing up, so I put on a white embroidered robe bought yesterday, and head out.

「Morning.」

「Quick, your girlfriend is here for you!」

What? Because of my busy job, my girlfriend dumped me half a year ago. So far, the number of people I've met in this city can be counted on two

hands. After going downstairs with Martha, I find out it's arcane soldier Zena waiting for me.

「Good morning! Mr. Satou.」

「Good morning, your clothes today look cute.」

Is Zena not on duty today? She's not in her army gear.

White blouse and turquoise skirt, with a slightly too big light yellow shawl on her shoulders. It feels a little rustic, but thanks to her charm, she gives an impression of innocence instead.

Being a beautiful teen girl sure has its benefits!

I remember her getting a sprain, can she move around?

「Is your ankle fine now?」

「Yes, the priest at Garlion Temple healed it yesterday.」

Whoa amazing—! A priest healed it? What holy magic is really like, I really want to see.

「I, I'm not on duty today, so I wanna show Mr. Satou, no, I would like to offer Mr. Satou a tour of the city.」¹

She doesn't have to talk so formally, her eyes are swirling around already.

Is it because I thought her small animal-like behavior is interesting? Her face is showing anxiety.

Oh, oops.

「Thank you, please do show me around.」

「Of course!」

Once I agreed, Zena responds with a golden smile like a blooming flower.

Yeah, youth is real bright!

I wash my face, then go out with Zena.

Breakfast is at the stalls set up for the morning market on Eastern

Boulevard. Despite being a noblewoman, she doesn't seem to dislike eating here.

Carried by the wind, the smell of "soy sauce" boiling is tickling my nose.

「Is the smell soy sauce?」

「Yes, it is one of the two well-known sauces invented by our Founding Father Yamato. It's also exported to many countries, so doesn't Mr. Satou's home country have it?」

「No, it's because I haven't smelled it for a long time.」

「Ah, so that's why!」

Like I suspected, Yamato seems to be written as “大和”², and what's the other sauce? Is it miso? ³

Zena walks towards a stall waving to her.

The stall is selling something deep-fried, croquettes maybe?

「Mister, please give me two Seiryuuyaki.」

「Yes, it will be ready soon, so please wait.」

Is it fried in lard? The smell is strong.

「Didn't Lilio come with you today?」

「Lilio just came back from the expedition yesterday, so she's still sleeping.」

Zena receives croquettes wrapped in some kind of leaves, and hands one to me. It's one Copper each, and while Zena's hands are occupied, I pay the man selling croquettes.

「Oh, I wanted to treat you as thanks for yesterday.」

「No it's fine, you let me ride with you to Seiryuu City, and helped me enter, which is more than enough.」

I decide to eat on a stone bench near the store.

There is some dirt on the stone bench, so I lay down a handkerchief from my backpack on Zena's spot and mine before sitting down.

「Ehehe, I feel like a princess.」

Abashed yet quite happy, she starts nibbling on the croquette in her hands like a bird.

As I admire her appearance, I bite down on my own croquette.

The meatless, potato croquette is fairly delicious, but is it because of the oil? It tastes a little greasy. If I have more than two at once, my stomach won't be able to take it.

「This Seiryuuyaki, it was recommended by Lilio's boyfriend!」

「Oh~ is he a chef?」

「No, he doesn't know how to cook, yet he knows how all sorts of food are made, a strange person.」

Hmm, it's dangerous to jump to conclusions, but could he be Japanese?

Yamato mentioned before is the same, seems like there are Japanese people other than me who have come to this world. Maybe, just by walking through a wardrobe, you can easily go back and forth! ⁴

A little girl holding a basket full of flowers, comes up to me after I have finished and am looking around.

「Sir, please buy some flowers!」

The young girl holds out her flowers and stands still.

She has been peeking this way from the start, so that's how she knew when I would finish right? She's young but calculating.

「Sure, how much?」

「Each bunch is one Micro. 」

I buy the flowers with a Micro coin.

The young girl thanks me happily, and runs to the next potential customer.

I present the flowers to Zena, after she finishes her croquette and wipes her hands, of course.

Zena makes a surprised expression.

Um, there's no one else here other than you no?

「Uh, can I really have it?」

「Of course, I'll be troubled if you don't.」

It would be weird if I threw it out!

Zena grins as if to relive a happy memory.

Oh? Does it really make you that happy? Whatever, as long as she is enjoying this.

To have something a little different, I eat a melon-like fruit being sold, which was cut into small, convenient pieces, then try some tuberous plant barbecued and served with soy sauce. It tastes a little funny, but unlike the appearance, is very delicious.

However, the next stall Zena recommends to me, has a strange feel to it.

「This is called a Fried Dragon Wing, it's made from a fried bat wing flavored with black miso. It's a specialty of Seiryuu City since a long time ago!」

So it compares a bat's wings to those of a dragon? Seems like this food has an interesting story behind it.

I choose to trust Zena, that it tastes better than it looks, so I order two of these.

「Sorry, big sis.」

As I am paying for the two of us, I hear Zena's gasp behind me, seems like a kid had bumped into her.

Zena herself is fine, but her white blouse is covered in miso and ruined.

"The blouse I borrowed from Mom..." she murmurs, tears gathering in her eyes.

If we go to the store on Tepta Boulevard yesterday, can they get rid of the stain?

「Excuse me—you look like you need help right? Do you require the services of a sorcerer?」

「Sorry, but what we need is a place that can remove the stain.」

Bringing up sorcerers now, I wish you'd recognize the situation!

「I mean, I can use Life Magic, so I can remove the stain.」

Oh, so that's what you do.

The timing of her entrance is so impeccable, it feels suspicious, but cleaning the soiled blouse is more important right now.

「Then, please go ahead.」

「Alright, cleaning magic and dying magic cost three Large Coppers total.」

Haggling is annoying, so I pay the three Large Coppers she requested and let her cast the spells.

「Then, I will first get rid of the stain. ■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■■ Soft Wash」

With the Life Magic cast on her, Zena becomes soaking wet.

Her blouse is now transparent, showing the tank top underneath, so I cover her up with a large towel from my backpack, ignoring the sounds of disappointment coming from guys around us.

The miso stain that had covered the blouse, is now completely gone.

As expected of magic.

「Next is drying. ■■■ ■■■■■ Dry.」

As if having through a dryer, Zena's blouse is now dried

After making sure her clothes are no longer transparent, I take off the towel from her shoulders. When my hand entered the range of the drying magic, it felt like a blow-dryer is blowing on it.

- *Obtained skill "Life Magic".*

Ooh! It's that simple?

It was obtained so easily. Maybe because I can't chant, so it's balanced.

After finishing her spells, the sorcerer girl disappears into the crowd.

Right, there's someone who can use magic here, so let's ask!

If Life Magic exists, then it might replace washing machines and blow dryers, there could even be a shower spell too.

「Zena, how do you chant a spell?」

「Chant a spell?」

「Yes, how do you pronounce it? It sounds difficult to me.」

「I see—Wind Magic generally starts with 『■■■■』, and if you really try to sound it out, it would be like 『RYU—RI'A (omitted) RA—RURERIRA—OH』. Well, for a beginner it's impossible to chant properly at first, but most people can memorize the sounds.」

Zena looks to the ground, making a "How should I explain it" expression.

「...A rhythm. Yeah, take those syllables, and sing it like a song following a beat. Then while keeping to that rhythm, slowly increase the speed, and it will become 『■■■■』! Yeah!」

I attempt to practice the phrase Zena first taught me, but I am still unable to properly chant a spell.

「It really is quite hard.」

「Of course, chanting normally takes years to learn.」

「Before you could use Wind Magic, how long did you train?」

「The official training was about three years, but now that I think about it, I feel like a big part of my everyday life before then was to prepare me to become a magician~」

What did she do? There is more than a hint of a shadow Zena's smiling face, almost like there is some bitterness.

「It started with reading aloud picture books about magical history, then singing practice, pronunciation practice, breathing techniques, and toys that detect the flow of mana, from learning to playing, it was all to raise me as a magician.」

I see, so early childhood education? There are also children in Japan who don't get to play because they are forced to learn at a young age.

I think we're getting off-topic.

「Your parents meant well by bring you up that way okay? Being able to use magic is great after all, you could even dream of flying with magic one day.」

I can tell Zena feels depressed, and try to cheer her up in a panic.

「Mr. Satou, why does Mr. Satou want to learn magic? Does it help you do business?」

「No, it's because the inns don't have baths, so I thought if I could use Life Magic, I can do without washing myself outside!」

To ease the tension, I try to say something silly.

Looks like making a fool of myself was worth it, since Zena stares at me with her teary eyes, and bursts out laughing.

「Ahahahaha! To-, to learn magic for that reason, it's the first time I've heard this!」

Was it that funny?

I seem to have hit Zena's funny bone, because she can't stop laughing.

「Is it that weird?」

I thought it was a pretty reasonable motivation? Doesn't it make things more convenient?

「It's weird!」

She responds immediately.

「Because, if you have the time and money to learn Life Magic, isn't it simpler to build bathhouse at home? And to heat the water, you can just hire a servant or buy a slave.」

Is that so—?

Do whatever you can do yourself! That's what I think, but in this world, hiring people for chores seems to be acceptable. The cost of labor is pretty cheap too.

Well, I learned a lot from this, so let's try beginner guides and pronunciation practice!

By the way, while we were talking, I obtained the skill “Modesty” and the titles “Clown” and “Gentleman”.

I didn't have time to look at the log!

The awkward tension is gone now, so we keep strolling and eating.

Next target, the sweet-smelling desserts section.

「This is called a sweet potato bun, which is made by mixing mashed steamed sweet potatoes into dough, then deep frying it. 」 ⁵

A sweet bun made with a yam-like tuber? It feels subtly Japanese.

I chow down on the sweet potato bun, while drinking some warm beverage that tastes like light ginger ale.

「Lilio told me about this store.」

The store she is introducing, is the same as the stall where Martha and I bought molasses yesterday, and the owner is even wearing the same apron as the other guy.

Anyways, I give two Coppers to the owner for the two of us, and he takes out two sticks, twisting it in a tea-colored fluid before taking it out.

Since she bothered to take me here, it would be awkward if I said I had it yesterday, so let's pretend we haven't had it for a long time!

「Molasses? How nostalgic!」

「You know about it?」

She looks a little disappointed, maybe it would be better if I had acted surprised—duly noted.

「The molasses I had was something colorless and clear, so I didn't know what it was at first.」

「Mister Noble, the clear molasses is a high class product made with rice and sugar, and this is for commoners, made using sweet potatoes, gabo berries, and malt, so the color is brown.」

The man cuts in with surprising reaction time.

Who's a noble? Doesn't look like he's talking to Zena.

「Uncle, I'm a commoner! What an acquaintance gave me was was clear, and I didn't know it was a high-class item.」

Because it was only two hundred yen at the festival.

After that, we looked through various stalls, enjoying the lively

atmosphere.

I also bought honey flavored pastries as a gift for the girls at Gateside Inn, which I hope will make them happy.

Having eaten enough food, we turn to the stalls selling other things.

I am interested in a store selling cute clamshells and clay bottles, and for some reason, the clamshell has a high market price.

Asking the store owner granny, I learn that the shell is a container for medicine.

「Young man, this is a very effective ointment!」

「What is it for?」

「Cuts, chapped skin, among other things. If you give it to your servants, they'll work as hard as horses!」

The wrinkled hands of the elderly store owner, really do look smoother than those of the Gateside Inn's madam.

Since the madam served me such delicious food, let's buy some as a gift for her! It's not that cheap, but still only costs a few Coppers.

「Then, I'll take five.」

「In that case, it would be fifteen Coppers, but I'll only charge you twelve.」

Wait, that's cheaper than market price!

When I have decided to take the deal, and begin pulling out money from my pocket, Zena's slender hand stops me.

「Granny, that's a bit much. It was two Coppers each the last time no? We're buying five so please make it nine Coppers.」

Ohh, Zena starts to haggle unreasonably with a smile.

「Ah I didn't notice because you are with the man, but aren't you the girl that was here with Lilio? I can't go lower than ten Coppers.」

「Then, please pitch in three of the small ones.」

Realizing that she can't lower the price anymore, Zena points to the shells next to the ointment, ask for freebies. Judging by the size, three of those shells are about as big as the bottle.

「Sheesh, if you keep imitating Lilio, you will marry even later! I'll pitch in one, and no more.」

「Fine, deal.」

When the granny mentioned marriage, Zena's face twitched a little, but still finishes the haggling with a smile. She's still only seventeen, so I think it's a little early to worry about marriage.

The granny swiftly wraps the shell in a leaf, and ties it up with some sort of vine.

If it isn't wrapped, the ointment would probably get everywhere in the backpack.

To thank Zena who haggled for me, I give her the ointment shell.

I was going to give her one anyways.

As we reached the end of the stalls, she brings me to another place next.

「Do you like this place?」

「Yeah, the wind feels nice.」

「Haha, I think so too!」

Zena giggles as she sweeps the scenery.

Here, is one of the towers on the city wall. As it was pretty close to the end of the open-air stalls, I ask her to bring me here. It's a military structure, so I wouldn't be able to get inside without Zena the arcane soldier.

Zena seems to be well-known, so despite being in her civilian clothing, she was still allowed in.

「Still, though I was the one who asked, is it really okay for a stranger to enter a military structure?」

「Yes, since the only thing that will attack a countryside city like Seiryuu are wyverns, and the neighboring countries have never attacked in several centuries. Even the war with demi-humans, was more than ten years ago.」

Hmm—the demi-human slaves in Seiryuu City, were they captured during that war?

「Zena, what is that windmill for?」

「Oh that? It's for milling flour. If a wyvern comes, it can quickly become a battery.」

A battery? In the middle of the city?

「Firing artillery from there, wouldn't the houses be damaged?」

「We could shoot cannonballs, but we usually only fire nets and warning shots at the wyvern.」

「I see, so it's meant to drive it away right?」

「Yeah, we would drive it to the lord's orchard on the other side to defeat it.」

If that happens, wouldn't the place be destroyed?

Maybe she noticed that I am really curious about it? She decides to also take me to see the windmill and the lord's orchard.

I was going to ask her myself later, but this is great.

On the way to a nearby windmill, she mentions a Parion Temple, so we take a detour to visit. Wasn't the guy giving out a questionable sermon yesterday from Zaikuon Temple? There's also the Galrion Temple that Zena said had healed her. Do the names of gods end with “-on”?

「Ah, there it is!」

We find the Parion Temple a few blocks from the open-air market.

It is built on a large tract of land, about three thousand meters squared? It's about the area of thirty houses.

Its fence is directly connected to the building, and upon entering the arch gateway, a lot for parking carriages with an open entrance is visible.

The parking lot has a carriage that looks very luxurious, though it's only my opinion, it makes me think the temple is very rich.

Zena enters the temple pulling my hand.

Inside the building is a ten meters wide room with a tall ceiling. At the back where there are banners with what looks to be a holy insignia, several priests are performing a baptism with merchants and their children.

There isn't any stained glass on the ceiling, but there are openings to let in light. The upper half of the walls are filled with murals of knights fighting horned demons with their swords. The layout is a little odd, but it is a very majestic painting.

「That depicts the First Hero battling with a Demon King.」

「Huh, I thought it was a knight.」

「It's because the holy sword is glowing blue, and if it were a knight holding a magic sword, it would be drawn with red light, so it's easy to tell! 」

Speaking of which, the holy sword I had glowed blue at one point right? Well, only the beginning, it stopped glowing after a while.

「Would a holy sword not glow blue if someone other than a Hero holds it? 」

「If they are accepted by the holy sword, it should also glow blue, like the Holy Sword Gjallarhorn and the Protector Sword Claíomh Solais that Our Founding Father Yamato passed down, they were also once used by people without the title of a Hero.」

Hmm—"accepted by the holy sword", huh?

Since I'm not that brave, I don't think I would be accepted by one. And, I know Claíomh Solais because it's fairly famous, but I've never heard about Gjallarhorn!

I did receive a lot of titles right? I even defeat a dragon, maybe I already

got the “Hero” title?

As I think about it, I check the list of my titles, and find one that surprises me.

—“God Slayer”?

I nervously check the logs, and fortunately, the record hasn’t been flushed yet.

Hidden among a large number of notices about enemies defeated by Meteor Shower, there are also messages saying “Title obtained: ____”.

The titles read “Reptilian Slayer”, “Dragon Slayer (Lesser)”, “Dragon Slayer (Adult)”, “Dragon Slayer (Ancient)”, “Dragon Slayer (Sky)”, and so on, not just ones that say “____ Slayer”, there are also titles like “Disaster of ____” and “Natural Predator of ____”.

And, at the end of all this—

- *Defeated Dragon God Aconkagura!*
- *Title obtained: “God Slayer”.*

—There it is.

Do you believe in god?

I see, Meteor Shower can even kill god? I see, it can kill...

I had fired three shots in a panic, but if I stopped after one, I might have had to face the wrath of an angry god? What a blessing in disguise!

As I am shocked wordless about what happened, the bell-like voice of a girl comes from behind.

「It’s not just the holy sword, those allowed to fight a Demon King, are limited to the Heroes who answered the call of the Young Goddess Parion. In front of the Hero wielding a holy sword bestowed by god, even a Demon King can only admit defeat.」

Turning around, I see a girl wearing a vermillion western-style priestess outfit.

Maybe because of her faded irises, I feel like she barely has any presence. Her outfit is different from the rest of the clergy, so is she someone powerful?

Next to her face, information is shown by the AR.

Yup, convenient.

「Oracle Ouna.」

「Long time no see, Zena of the Mariantell family, how is your younger brother?」

「Fine, he will inherit the title next year, so he's studying hard.」

「I understand, but if there is anything I can do to help, don't hesitate, come to me.」

「I will, thank you.」

After talking to the Oracle, Zena turns around and introduces her.

「Lady Ouna is the daughter of the Duke, and since my mother was her nanny, she often takes care of my younger brother.」

I see, so the duke's daughter has a thing for Zena's younger brother? In order to hear about him, she purposely came to talk.

「Nice to meet you, I am a traveling merchant, the name's Satou.」

「I am Ouna the Oracle who serves the Goddess Parion, and please forget what Zena said about my upbringing, because worldly ranks mean nothing to a Oracle.」

So like a Buddhist monk?

She's younger than Zena, but due to her composure, she has the air of a loving mother.

「However, I am relieved, even for someone like Zena who is only interested in magic, springtime has come.」

「N, no, that's not—Mr. Satou is...um, just met, uh.」

Is Zena not used to talking about love? She was thrown off by the Oracle's words, and started to panickingly stutter some excuse.

I do like her, but not enough to fall in love, yet, I don't want to be denied, such adolescent feelings are so bothersome.

Wait, rather than coloring me naive, I am just nostalgic for my teenage years!

I wanted to chat a little more with the Oracle, but there is a commotion at the entrance, so I give up reluctantly.

「Priest, Master Polier's life is at stake, please have some mercy, and go see him!」

「Master Polier? Normal priests like us, we can't treat his illness.」

「Then, please ask the Oracle!」

「Isn't Master Polier's residence on the west side! Bringing someone like the Oracle who is the goddess's prophet to that place full of brothels, it's impossible!」

「Please make an exception!」

A priest is arguing with a man who barged in.

「Zena, there seems to be a gravely ill patient, so I must take my leave.」

The Oracle states, then goes to that man and the priest.

「I will go, please prepare the carriage.」

Hushed talk between the unwilling priest and the Oracle can be heard, since even though it's bad to eavesdrop, but I forgot to turn off the Clairaudience Skill, so I listened to the whole thing.

「Oracle Ouna, shouldn't you deliver the prophecy to the Duke?」

「For that matter, please have the Chief Priest do it.」

「But, the prophecy said 『Disaster at Zaikuuon Temple』 so isn't it dangerous to go the west side where their temple is?」

「Master Polier's residence is far from the temple, so it's fine.」

Zaikuuon Temple? That's the one the Fat Chief Priest preaching on the east side belongs to.

Maybe he's gathering his believers and planning something?

Well, even if there is a riot, it's fine as long as we don't get too close. If it's only Zena and I, I can bring her to the rooftops to hide.

Zena and I leave the temple and continue on the street.

Strolling in a European style town with a cute girl, it's really enjoyable.

In this city, there would be public parks, open plazas, and wells set up every few blocks.

As we walk past one of those parks, I look around it.

In the open plaza with clean-cut grass, there is an elderly couple resting with young children. About a dozen young adults are practicing martial arts. The grass in the park looks well-kept but is actually a mix of different weeds.

Zena seems to have found something, and runs under a tree growing in the park.

「What is it?」

「Mr. Satou, I found this.」

Held in her palms, there is a chick.

A beautiful girl holding a chick basked under the light shining between the leaves, such a picturesque scene that makes me want to capture it with my phone camera and upload it.

「There should be a nest on the tree.」

Hmm—two and half meters to that branch? I could jump straight up there, but it would look humanly impossible.

Would it work if I grab the branch and swing myself up?

「Um, Mr. Satou, would you please?」

Since Zena meekly asked for my help, I instantly agreed.

Well, I did plan on doing it.

Receiving the chick, I first grab on to the branch, and swing myself up that way with one hand hanging, letting my feet stand on the branch, then my entire body. I am also trying to not injure the chick, so it took some time.

The chick's nest is sitting between two leafy branches, but it wasn't too difficult to return it. Its parent threatened me when I returned the bird, which makes me worry a little about all the chicks begging for food in the nest.

I can use both hand son the way down, so I easily move around, and on the last branch, I don't forget to hang from it before getting off.

If I just jump right down, Zena will be worried.

「Mr. Satou really is nimble!」

「Oh, it wasn't that amazing.」

As I respond to Zena's compliment with modesty, we resume chatting. In the process I find out that by "Would you please" Zena was asking me to give her a lift so she could climb the tree herself.

Good thing I misunderstood. It's no good for a lady in a skirt to climb trees, Zena!

Looking at the young people training, I bring up the subject.

「Zena, what does the army do for training?」

「Well—A common soldier's training is the same everywhere, but training for arcane soldiers tries not to deplete our mana. For the majority of arcane soldiers, we tend to ensure that we can always use magic at full strength.」

So the training is separate.

A magician without mana indeed serves no purpose.

「The roles arcane soldiers and magicians receive are different based on our attributes, and it might surprise outsiders to say this, but attributes other than fire don't really have spells that attack directly.」

Fire is more aggressive, like trials by fire for example.

「My Wind Magic has Wind Barrier that defends against arrows and Air Wall which stops battering rams, along with Wind Whisper for conveying orders, so there is a lot of strategic potential. Reconnaissance in the air is also useful, but there's no one in the Duchy yet who can cast a flying spell.」

Wasn't it Zena's dream to fly with magic some day?

「If you learn to fly, it would be great to have a date in the sky!」

Though I said it jokingly, Zena blushes all the way to her neck, and says while biting her lips: "Pleas...please anticipate it!"

She's pretty cute, but I worry that she will be deceived by a bad man.

Not far from the park is the windmill tower.

I can't go up the tower, but they still let me see the flour mills on the first floor.

Massive metallic machinery grinding grain with a thundering noise, it really gets my blood pumping.

But, these are normal windmills! In a fantasy setting, I wish that there would be fairies dancing while milling flour!

Having thought of a question, I ask Zena.

「Couldn't you use magic to mill the flour?」

「We could, but it's still easier to use windmills!」

What are you saying? I was answered with an expression that seems to say this. Oh yeah—

The orchard, our next destination, is a little too far to walk there, so we got on one of the rental carriages all over Central Boulevard. To anywhere in the city regardless of distance, it's only one Large Copper to ride.

The rental carriage has no roof, and the seats are about shoulder level, so it's perfect for touring around.

The carriage moves through the city in a casual trotting pace.

Riding around a fantasy town with a beautiful girl on my side, it feels great. If she were a gorgeous busty babe it would be perfect, but it would be asking for too much.

The carriage leaves the main road, and heads toward the craftsmen sector in the north.

As we enter the craftsmen sector, the number of tough-looking people with serious muscle increased.

After navigating the workshops and factories, and passing through a lumber yard, we arrive at the inner wall. Then going west, there is a small path between the inner and outer walls, which seems to lead to the lord's orchard.

「After this, we'll arrive at the orchard!」

「The walls are towering over us, it really looks impressive!」

「Yeah! It sure looks reliable!」

With her hands in front of her, Zena comes close.

And as if on cue, the carriage shakes, maybe because it hit a rock on the road?

「Eek」

I catch Zena, who lost her balance and bumped right into my chest.

Compared to before when she was wearing armor, the softness is different. Though her chest is unfortunately flat, she still has the softness

inherent to women.

If possible, I'd really like to wait five years before doing this.

「Alright?」

「Ye-, yes! Excuse me, I'll get up now.」

Zena starts to panic, but she didn't have to be do bothered.

Suddenly, I notice the driver smile briefly. It was intentional! What a considerate driver for couples.

Going ahead, we see an open gate, and the guard posted there. The driver gives a nod to the guard, then enters the orchard through the gate.

It looks too small to supply the city with food, yet also too large to be the lord's private orchard.

The carriage moves slowly on the path between fields.

I watch the people working on the fields, who seems to be harvesting something, and by looking closer with the Telescope skill, I realize that they are gathering the gabo berries I saw yesterday.

I've already experienced this at the market, but there really is a lot of school-aged children working.

「Those children, I think they are probably kids from the orphanage. It's harvesting season right now, so other kids in town might also be helping out.」

「The gabo berries they're harvesting, do they taste good?」

「Not at all. They're occasionally served in the army, but they smell weird and taste bitter, so no one really likes them. 」

Zena makes a frown in distaste.

Do you hate it that much?

「But, despite not being tasty, why plant this many?」

I look at the field full of gabo berries, and question Zena about it.

They could have planted potatoes or something, maybe it is nutritious or something?

「As an administrator said, it can be harvested many times a year. The yield isn't very high, so in order to produce something every month, they almost never stop planting it. It also enriches the soil, so thanks to the gabo berry, much less people go hungry.」

What a convenient magic vegetable. It certainly has a lot of value.

She's doing the administrator who taught her this proud! What a detailed explanation, Zena.

「Unfortunately, since it can only be planted in walled-off areas like this orchard, the food situation in the countryside is actually rather harsh.」

The outer wall is shorter here at the orchard than in the town, only about two and a half meters tall?

It has to be planted within walls, why's that? Can it not survive pests? Is it monopolized by the lord? A strange mystery.

「What's the reason?」

「It's the goblins' favorite food. If it's not planted in a walled-off area, it will be quickly consumed by goblins. So, exporting it is impossible too.」

Ooh, there are goblins too!

If I get the chance, I really want to see one from a safe place.

「Feels like people might smuggle it.」

「If it's discovered, they'll be punished by slavery!」

Seems like there are people so hungry, they're willing to risk becoming slaves.

「That is the anti-dragon tower.」

What Zena is pointing at is one of the twelve large towers built on this orchard. But only two of the ones visible have windmills like the ones in town.

「They look tougher than the towers in the town.」

「Yes, since in order to fight wyverns and dragons, they come with large mana cannons, so these towers are built to be sturdy.」

Regrettably, since the anti-dragon towers have cannons at the top, civilians aren't allowed to enter.

Just thought of an issue, rather than doing it here, they might as well fight outside the city, since if the fields are ruined, production would decrease!

Wondering about this, I convey my confusion to Zena.

「That's because this area was prepared for fighting wyverns in the first place.」

Wyvern attacks are far and few in between, yet it's wasteful not to do anything with the land, so the Duke at the time decides to have it double as an orchard and a ranch.

Ah I see, so I had the order reversed!

As the carriage trucks along the roads wrapped around the towers, I discover a blackened tower that seems to be fully destroyed.

There is someone taking measurements nearby, is it being rebuilt?

「Was that tower destroyed by a wyvern?」

「Right, that's the tower destroyed by a lesser dragon that attacked nearly two years ago, and at the time, half of the towers fell along with this, and even the town was damaged. Well, it was repelled in the end.」

「Repelled, huh.」

「Though its rank isn't high, it was still a true dragon, and if defeating a

wyvern was difficult then a dragon is impossible. It would take a great magician like Our Founder Yamato, or the Hero of Saga Empire.」

My eyes dart toward the Storage, but I stop myself.

Zena continues her story:

「Though the lesser dragon attack was resolved this way, when the black adult dragon came forty years ago, we were no match for it. Maybe it's hard to believe, but even the outer wall was destroyed back then! The wall near the orchard is shorter because was built after that. 」

「Then, how was it repelled? With the help of the Hero in the end?」

「No, it devoured all the goats in the ranch, then perhaps satisfied after that, the black dragon flew away casually. The way dragons see people, maybe it's like how we see ants!」

Is the power gap that large?

In that case, I who has defeated dragons, can probably conquer the world. I don't have that kind of dream or ambition though.

Oh yeah, I heard about Heroes in the temple too right?

「The Heroes? The Saga Empire seems to know the magical ritual to summon Heroes, but since performing a summon is so taxing, it isn't done outside of the Demon King attacks that come every sixty-six years. The Great Yamato and the First Emperor of the Saga Empire might have also been people summoned by magic to save the world! Awesome, right!」

Heroes are summoned? So they are Japanese? The Founder was “大和”, and the First Emperor was “嵯峨” or “佐賀”⁶? The reason holy swords are named Excalibur and Claíomh Solais, I think I understand now.

That Saga Empire, it might be the key to returning to my original world. Just so I don't forget, let's write that down in the notes of the Social tab!

「You said every sixty-six years, so do you know when a Demon King will attack again?」

「It wouldn't be strange for a Demon King to attack any time now, but there hasn't been sightings of any Demon King so far.」

In other words, it's possible that one has already revived, but the news of it hasn't gotten around, huh.

「Is it not simply because the news of the revival hasn't been received?」

「Every city in Shiga Kingdom and Saga Empire has magical tools for emergency situations, so when a Demon King appears, the news will be delivered even if the city is destroyed.」

Oh, that's impressive.

「And, right before a Demon King would appear, the Oracle at each temple will receive a prophecy, so we know ahead of time.」

That is really impressive! Good job, gods!

「It's not just for Demon Kings, prophecies can also predict disasters, but the Starfall two days ago, not a single Oracle received a prophecy, which due to being on the other side of the 『Barrier of the Dragon Canyon』, maybe it couldn't be predicted.」

Oh, that barrier? So it couldn't be predicted because it was under the dominion of another deity?

「Would a Demon King lead monsters when it attacks?」

「Depending on the Demon King, some fight alone, but most have large armies of monsters and demons, and there was even one who led humans and demi-humans.」

Hmm—? So much variety!

「However, a Demon King's most fearsome subordinates are the 『Demons』 , and even a Low Rank one is as powerful as a wyvern.」

「Low Rank sounds weak, but is actually strong.」

「Only magic or magical weapons can injure demons, so they're a lot of trouble」

「There are Low Ranks, so are there Middle and High Ranks too?」

「Yes, people say a Middle Rank can easily destroy a city, in other words, so strong it would take the entire order of knights and all court magicians to defeat it. Against Middle Rank Demons, magic is not as effective, and a small spell wouldn't even scratch it.」

A Middle Rank can destroy cities, Heroes who fight them really have it hard.

But that's just a Middle Rank, there are even stronger ones right?

「Then, a High Rank?」

「Like dragons and Demon Kings, a human can't normally win against them. If we do encounter one, it's not about "How do we defeat it?" but "How do we minimize the damage?" and "How do we escape?"」

Just like the adult dragon earlier.

Huh? I might have forgotten something. What is it? Oh well, I'll remember later!

I try to learn about other things.

「So, are Demon Kings or Dragons stronger?」

「Dragons.」

Ooh! An immediate answer.

「Among the Demon Kings of the past, there was a particularly strong Demon King who won against the Hero, but a dragon defeated it in the end.」

「In that case, why not skip the Hero summon, and ask dragons to defeat it?」

「That's impossible. The dragons simply think it's fun to fight Demon Kings and demons, and will never do it for humans. And compared to the damage a Demon King can cause, the ruins from a dragon fighting a Demon King is far worse.」

I see, so the goal is “Before a dragon shows up, have the Hero defeat the Demon King with the gods' help”?

Considering the power of Meteor Shower, don't I serve the same purpose now as the dragons? If the Hero loses, just quietly cast Meteor Shower from afar and defeat the Demon King!

After all, fighting a Demon King up close, is impossible for a wimp like me.

Talking about such serious topics, it was quite tiresome, so we end up sitting in a fallow field watching the cows graze, and pleasantly chatting about what kind of food we like or dislike.

After leaving the orchard, we thought about going to a restaurant at a plaza near the castle gate with favorable reviews, but it is still a long time to noon, so we left the inner wall, and circled to the west side.

I really want to see the alchemy store in the west!

「In the west side, other than store for those who aren't as well off, there are butchers and alchemy stores too. There are also, uh...」

Zena stops here a little embarrassed, unable to say the word.

According to the Map, there are pawn shops, loan sharks, prostitution and so on. The slave trade center is also on this end. She probably didn't want to say prostitution or brothel, right?

If I ask about it, it will become sexual harassment.

After passing the area that sells food and everyday items, less reputable stores start to appear.

Hot women and scum-like men are wandering around.

In the plaza on Western Boulevard, there are all sorts of open-air stalls, and auctions of birds and other animals are being held. Looking closely, there are young men and women being sold as slaves tied up next to the animals.

I have seen a lot of slaves so far, but seeing an auction like this, it still doesn't feel right.

I suddenly have urge to buy all of them and then grant them freedom, but I'm not sure I can ensure their well being after that, so I dismiss the notion.

At the front of the plaza, there is a merchant-looking man announcing details about the slave market, which will be held for three consecutive nights starting tomorrow.

Past that plaza I see brothels everywhere, which reminds me a bit of Yoshiwara⁷ depicted in historical dramas.

Women who do this professionally are the best, rather than slaves that are unwillingly forced into it, I think it's better to do it with someone who honed their skills.

Let's go to a place with pretty ladies tonight!

There are bars like that right? Rather than soap play, I would like to talk dirty with someone—Wait, even if she's not a lover, it's not the time to be thinking about such things in her company. Repent, repent.

Along the outer wall there are parks every few blocks, and in one such park I see many people gathered.

「Please stop.」

Staring at the crowd, Zena stops the carriage in a strong tone.

「What is it, Zena.」

「Mr. Satou, please look over there.」

Hmm? Hey, isn't he the Fatty Chief Priest from last time?

「We must punish the demon's subordinates! Punishing them with this holy stone is doing good!」

In front of the mob, I can hear the voice of the fat Priest at the top of his lungs raised an octave higher.

No one listened when he took the effort to go to the east side, and now he's going local?

However, unlike before, doesn't it feel like riot might happen? Is the "Disaster" that Oracle mentioned talking about this?

「O faithful citizens! Remember the sign of divine wrath known as the Starfall two days ago!」

「 「OHHHH!」 」 」

「 「WE REMEMBER!」 」 」

「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

Are half of them secretly in on it or just want to yell?

「And! What's more! There was even a Demon King's subordinate that attacked the Duke's castle yesterday!」

「 「OH GOD!」 」 」

「 「PLEASE HELP US HERO!」 」 」

「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

Hmm? Did something like that happen?

I look toward Zena, and I was met with a puzzled expression.

「Yesterday, there was a man who barged into the guard office saying 『There is a shadowy figure flying around the Duke's castle』, but none of the guards on duty or the people in town have seen it.」

「So this is a farce right?」

「I don't know what he's trying to accomplish. Because the man he talked about, is already jailed in the dungeon for causing trouble.」

What a harsh parallel universe.

「It means our god's protection has become weak! Do good! O faithful citizens! If you do good you will be blessed in times of trouble!」

「 「 「CHIEF PRIEST! HELP US!」 」 」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

「 「 「DO GOOD!」 」 」

This simple-minded mob, it is too easily swayed.

「Do good! Have you understood! Do good!」

「 「 「DO GOOD!」 」 」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

「 「 「SAVE US!」 」 」

Seems like the people on this street will easily fall for phone scams or pyramid schemes.

「Look here!」

The Fat Chief Priest leans back and points toward the center of the plaza.

「These demi-humans are the incomplete forms of demons, no, they're the Demon King's subordinates. Granting them divine punishment is doing good.」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

「 「 「KILL!」 」 」

Oi, you instigator.

「Wait! O faithful citizens! If we kill them, it's against the law. You must not!
」

「 「 「What should we do, Chief Priest!」 」 」

「 「 「KILL!」 」 」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

There sure are a lot of people just yelling!

「We can't kill them! We can do good by throwing the holy stone at the demon subordinates.」

「 「 「CHIEF PRIEST!」 」 」

「 「 「GIMME STONES—!」 」 」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

Following the direction the Fat Chief Priest pointed, I see three beastgirls.
The Dog Ear, the Cat Ear, and the Reptilian girls are crouched and trembling.

「Not only that, you can do good with your money!」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

「 「 「DO GOOD!」 」 」

Oh, there are fewer people yelling.

「Each holy stone is one Copper. There's a special discount now, five holy stones for one Large Copper!」

The voices stop.

People like their cash.

「What's wrong! Faithful people! The holy stones are limited! The sooner you do good the better!」

「 「 「I'LL BUY!」 」 」

「 「 「SELL ME!」 」 」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

No immunity to limited editions.

「Buy them from my staff here! Line up! You're doing good by lining up!」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

「 「 「LINE UP!」 」 」

Isn't the Fat Chief Priest using some mind-controlling magic?

The people who bought the holy stones throw them at the beast girls without reserve, completely mercilessly.

What! Really?

「I can't watch this anymore! I'm going over. Mr. Satou, please wait here.」

Zena gets off the carriage in a hurry, running towards the center of the commotion.

I was too baffled by the situation to react in time.



「 「 「KILL DEMI-HUMANS!」 」 」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

「 「 「PUNISH DEMONS!」 」 」

The Reptilian girl is protecting the smaller Dog Ear and Cat Ear girls.

The mob's emotions run high but only a few stones are thrown at the beastgirls.

When I spot someone raising a stone to throw it at the beastgirls, I shatter the holy stone by flicking a Micro coin in my hand. I am a little afraid about hitting someone, but thanks to the Throwing skill I didn't miss.

Maybe because they are shocked by seeing a stone in hand shatter, people holding holy stones paused their movements.

That bought enough time for Zena to cast a spell to protect the girls right?

Standing up for the beastgirls is simple, but it's pointless if they do the same to you...

Observing the beast girls, I see the AR displaying information as usual.

That's it!

I quickly consider the information provided.

What I discovered by staring at the beastgirls, is the name of their owner.

It's not the Fat Chief Priest's name.

Then where is their owner?

Could it be, their owner isn't here? Maybe they couldn't disobey the Fat Chief Priest—or maybe they're the Fat Chief Priest's accomplice!

I have only relied on the AR pop-ups recently, it's time to use Full Map Exploration to its fullest.

I search the owner's name on the Map.

There! Corner of the plaza! Sitting on crates watching the commotion, a smirking short man with a rat-like face and beady eyes.

I look through the AR information.

The short man is named Urs, thirty-nine. Skills: "Scam", "Persuasion", "Threaten". Slaves in possession: "Cat", "Dog", "Lizard".

...Hmm? Only the race is shown for slaves, no names?

No, that doesn't matter right now, I need more details! This isn't enough.

Position: "Seiryuu City lower class citizen". Guild: "Sewer Rat"—That's it!

Search for Guild: "Sewer Rat"!

There are fifty-two members of the guild, and ten in this plaza including Urs, so other than Urs and the big guy guarding him, eight are serving as plants in the mob.

I label every member, including the ones who aren't here.

Okay, let's go!

- *Skill Obtained: "Covert Ops".*

However, disturbed by the beastgirls' situation, I missed one important fact. Time cannot be turned back, but if I had taken a little longer, it might not have turned out this way.

Zena finally gets to the Fat Chief Priest.

「Please stop your ruthless behavior!」

「What, girl! Are you a demon's accomplice too!」

At some point, he stopped using the word "subordinate". It's hard to retort his accusation, he really knows how to incite people!

「 「 「A demon's accomplice is also a demon ! 」 」 」

「 「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

While Zena is buying time for me, let's do something to the plants in the mob!

「Don't say irresponsible things! Is Zaikuon Temple going to break the law!」

「What's wrong with throwing holy stones at demons?」

What's with the non-sequiturs. No, the Fat Chief Priest understands, so he's trying to muddle the issue?

Coming down from the rental carriage, I wade through the mob. Using the experience from taking the packed subway and the power of the Evasion skill, I move through the crowd.

「 「 「OHHHHHHH!」 」 」

「Yeah! Stone that girl too!」

「 「 「OHHHHHHH!」 」 」

Zena seems to have cast Wind Defense ahead of time, not just for herself, but to protect the beast girls too. As expected of the army's arcane soldier.

Alright, let's clean up before the mob starts a riot.

Even for Zena, it's dangerous to be lost in a stampede.

I move next to one of the men throwing stones.

In order to take him out, I adjust my Grappling skill to the max. Thanks to that, I know how to knock him out, neutralizing him without killing.

I take him down with one hit.

Since it was a sudden move, no one nearby noticed. I pretend to be concerned about my suddenly anemic friend, and carry him outside the plaza, and throw him down. Time is of the essence, so I won't care about details.

- *Obtained skill "Acting".*
- *Obtained skill "Kidnapping".*
- *Obtained skill "Assassination".*

The skill Kidnapping looks useful, so I max it out. I leave Assassination alone, I won't touch it okay?

There is a young man in a priest outfit in the plaza backing up Zena.

「About demi-humans being demons, rather than all of Zaikuuon Temple, only you are saying that no?」

「Hmph, the all-loving priest from Galrion Temple? If you like beastpeople that much, after we're done, their bodies are all yours!」

Wow, what a dirty bastard!

Zena starts to blush—not. Did she not understand? Good.

「Kill demi-humans!」

「Punish demons!」

「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

I'll leave the debating to Zena and him, and do some pest control.

The second and the third guys are quickly knocked out, and I leave them on the side of the street somewhere. Like throwing out a beer bottle on the ground, it's an easy job.

「Do you understand? If you keep inciting people like this, there'll be a riot! Zaikuuon will become the instigator of a rebellion!」

「Foolish, pretentious girl! Don't kill the demons? You are the rebel here!」

「Kill demons!」

「What if that girl is the demon's avatar?」

「 「OHHHHHH!」 」 」

The purging is half done.

The number of people yelling has decreased. There's a particularly loud guy, but he's not a member of Sewer Rat, let's just label him for now.

I'll have a talk with him after the purge.

「People of the west side! Everyone is as afraid as you are! However, don't become the cowards who blame it on the weak!」

「Did you hear, citizens! Galrion Temple says you are the bad guys! You're trying to do good and he called you evil!」

The crowd answered the Fat Chief Priest's taunting, but the volume is much smaller.

「Kill demons」

「You fake priest!」

「Ohhhhh!」

Good, two more.

I quickly take them out and throw them away.

Before Urs enters the stage, I have a talk with the loud guy, and make some final preparations.

- *Skill obtained: "Conspiracy".*

「Please stop them, I'll block every stone they throw!」

「You mean to interrupt the holy ritual! You godless fool!」

The Fat Chief Priest barks angrily, but there are only a few responses from the crowd. Those voices are also disappearing one by one.

I slap Urs's shoulder from behind him.

「You're up next!」

「You, who're you! Hey Benji! Knock him out!」

Surprised, Urs tries to order the man behind him with his chin, but turning around, the tall guy is nowhere to be seen, quite embarrassing.

「Benji? Where did the moron go!」

「If you mean the tall guy he left with some woman!」

Actually I knocked him out in the alley.

I kick the nerve cluster in his abdomen, making him faint, and I bring him up to the front.

「Everyone, disperse, or else the army will come! If you have any concerns please come to the temple, we will listen to any and all of your troubles!」

「You mean to interrupt the holy ritual! You godless fool!」

Aren't you both priests?

I throw Urs between them.

「Ooh! Urs! You bastard! What did you do to the faithful believer who provided me the demi-human slaves for this holy ritual!」

Anyway, ignore the Fat Chief Priest.

「Zena, thanks for waiting, and good job to the priest over there too. This man is the instigator.」

「As expected of Mr. Satou, you're so nimble!」

「The instigator?」

Your compliment is a little weird, Zena.

I smile to the skeptical young priest and nod, since rather than introducing myself, there are more important things.

「Zena, if you still have the mana, could you use magic to broadcast my voice to the plaza?」

「Yes! ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■ ■■■ Wind Whisper.」

I raise the fainted Urs high, so everyone can see him clearly.

I purposely hide behind Urs's body, so I'm not as conspicuous.

「Everyone, do you see? This man is the one who planned all this! He lent his slaves to the Zaikuon priest, incited everyone's worries, pretended the rocks are holy stones, and wanted to scam everyone's precious wealth! 」

- *Skill obtained: "Indictment".*

「Return my money—!」

There is a particularly large voice among the crowd, and as if encouraged by it people started to say “Return my money”.

「In addition, he has another goal! After making some money, his real goal in taking advantage of the Zaikuon priest! He means to start a rebellion against the Duke! He is the real demon worshipper!」

The Deception skill is at max speed!

“Making some money” is the truth, but the other two are just bullshit.

Actually, I have no idea what his goal is, so I make up something shocking.

- *Skill obtained: “False Accusation”.*

If it’s to sell holy stones, he made five Silvers selling a hundred of those, it’s not worth the cost of the demi-human slaves. From what I see with the Market Price skill, the three of them are worth six Silvers. If this had gone on, the slaves would really die, definitely.

Right? It doesn’t make sense.

「Is that guy working with the demons—!」

That loud idiot, I did ask him to go against the Fat Chief Priest, but please look at the situation a little! You’re going to start a riot.

Hmm? Demons?

Oh, I remember! When I first got to the city—

『Hohohohoho.』

With two hands pinned behind his back and hung up by me, Urs starts to laugh with an energetic voice.

Urs who should have been completely immobilized, is swinging pitch-black arms to retaliate.

Those demonic claws rip into the Fat Chief Priest.

—I had discovered a demon before.

His organs shredded by the sharp claws, the Fat Zaikuuon Chief Priest spills his guts everyone, and dies on the spot.

In the face of such a brutal murder, I am dumbfounded.

So surprised, I can't think about anything, and let go of Urs's arms I had pinned down.

「What...what are those arms?」

The black arms swinging around its claws, had sprouted from Urs's chest. Kneeling on the ground, Urs spits out blood and stares at his own chest shockingly.

「Demon! Everyone get away from the plaza!」

The young priest who returns to his senses first warns the crowd, and backs away from the demon claws himself, then starts chanting a spell with a strong, resolute voice.

The people who saw Urs grow black arms from his chest, like a disturbed nest of baby spiders, scatters everywhere.

Regardless of Urs's condition, the demonic claws are trying to attack as if they have their own will, but since Urs had fainted on the ground, the claws cannot reach.

「Mr. Satou! Bring those kids away from the plaza! I'll call for backup!」

「Un-, understood!」

Shamefully, I only come to my senses after Zena gives me an order.

I have to make sure the beastgirls are safe, otherwise confronting the Fat Chief Priest would have been in vain.

I try to break the chains by pulling, but the pole comes out of the ground with a bang first. It's not what I had planned, but they can move like this now.

「It's dangerous, go hide. I can't remove the chains, so the three of you find a sturdy building and hide there.」

However, the three are standing still. Doesn't seem like they can't move.

「There's an order, so we can't~?」

The Cat Ear kid speaks with a despondent voice. Her words are trembling.

「Can't move *no desu*」⁸

「Forgive us, our owner Urs ordered us clearly 『Do not leave this place』 , so if we do, the enslaving collars will stop us. Please leave us.」

The Dog Ear kid and the bleeding Reptilian girl, shake their heads in despair.

Help arrives unexpectedly.

「Go! Kill the demon!」

The people who were stoning the beastgirls, are now throwing their holy stones (lol) at the now-armed Urs. And the one who gave order, is the loud guy I had talked to earlier.

Crack, Urs's neck bends at an unsettling angle—I avert my eyes.

This world really has no regard for life, the guy unhesitantly said to kill the demonized Urs.

...I might be the only pacifist fool here.

「Ooh! The demon got up! Everyone run!」

I turn back in response to the loud guy's words, and I see Urs's corpse that should have collapsed, without bending its joints, stands up as if I'm watching a video in reverse, looking like a zombie.

The body is emitting a black smoke.

I look over to the young priest, but he's still chanting his spell. You're taking too long.

『Insignificant ants, breaking my host's head was helpful, me grateful.』⁹

Did it learn this way of speaking from a clown somewhere? He doesn't sound as scary as he looks.

「...■■■■■ ■■■■■ Circle of Anti-Evil!」

『Measly tricks, me must mock.』

The young priest focused on chanting casts his spell, creating a magical circle of light that seals the arms demon inside.

The arms demon, despite saying “me must mock”, can't seem to get out of the magic circle, while the young priest begins chanting the next spell.

『Grrrr. You can cast magic with a human throat! Me miscalculates.』

The people of this town, they're peeking this way from inside buildings in fear.

The demon splits Urs's corpse apart, revealing its true form.

A grotesque lifeform that looks like a huge eyeball with wings and arms, just by looking at it, I think my SAN stat is decreasing.

『Pushurururu—much easier to speak now, me thankful.』

It's harder to understand though!

And it doesn't even have a mouth, how is it talking? Is it vibrating the eyeball like a speaker?

No, that doesn't matter at all.

This must be the “Disaster” that the Oracle spoke of, and the riot earlier was a sign.

Looking at the eyeball demon, I see the AR is now saying Low Rank

Demon rather than Urs, and there is a name, but it's not written in normal letters, but in phonetic symbols.

I keep my eye on the eyeball demon and do a search, seems like with the death of Urs, the beastgirls' statuses now say "No Owner".

Therefore these kids can move now right?

「...■■■ Sacred Javelin.」

The young priest shoots a spear of light.

『Me no laugh.』

With a bellow, the eyeball demon creates a shadowy wall, blocking the light spear in its path.

So not only can it speak easily now, it can also use magic?

It bellows again, and the magic circle at its feet is shattered.

『The disturbance, fear, uncertainty, bigotry, and arrogance just now, it pleases me! Me satisfied.』

Shit! If it attacks with magic now, I can't protect these kids.

Do I go for the kill? But, if I can't defeat it in one hit, these kids will be in trouble.

The eyeball demon lets out a blood-curdling shriek.

『Therefore, a base will be made for me master on this land, isn't it great? Me diligent.』

Master! Is it the Demon King?

With the eyeball demon at the center, a black magic circle appears.

Damn, it must be some kind of magical attack. Deciding to get out, I grab the three of them.

The young priest also grabs the elderly people in the plaza who couldn't

leave in time and starts his retreat.

As I start to leave, the army with Zena at the front, arrives at a bad time.

「Mr. Satou! The army's here!」

Zena looks all sweaty, she must have ran here desperately.

Judging from how fast they got here, it must be the squadron sent here to break up the riot that the Fat Chief Priest caused. With the clanking of metal equipment, the squadron surrounds the demon with large shields, standing in formation.

Sorry to interrupt your efforts, but this is an emergency.

「Zena! The demon is doing something! Get out!」

While I considered running with the three under my arms first, I decide to warn Zena again, but the situation aggravates further.

The ground under my feet twists and deforms like special effects from the Showa Era¹⁰. Ground that should have been solid, is now glowing a deep purple, swirling, pulling us under... A flash dyes the world around us "black".



As the flash fades, a cave-like area becomes visible.

Since the ground is emitting a weak purple glow, I can see a little. The ground is mostly intact, but I can also see bedrock. In this room about ten meters in radius, there is an exit on one of the walls.

Here with me, are only the three beastgirls I protected.

Not to mention Zena, even the eyeball demon is no longer nearby, and of course, neither is the squadron Zena brought.

『Welcome to master's dungeon, it has no name yet, but monsters will be made right now, just be grateful, me studios!』

The eyeball demon's voice rings from somewhere, but it doesn't sound like telepathy at all?

The Cat Ear girl points toward a corner in the ceiling, where there is a vent carrying the sound.

『Please me, be afraid! Kill! Steal! Me rewards!』

The eyeball demon pauses a bit, then continues.

『Giving up makes the heart weak, me despise!

So every room is connected to the exit, me fair!

Despair after hope is great , so you prey must work, me encourage you!』

...I see.

This game's mandatory quest "Dungeon Escape Mission" has started!

- *Obtained title: "Dungeon Explorer".*

Chapter 5: Dungeon

「Satou here,

I was very fascinated by a dungeon game in my father's collection when I was little, which was probably the reason I went into the game industry. I'll never forget the triumph I felt when I obtained a super-rare sword in that game.」

I check the Map, which merely displays "Demon's Dungeon: Lowest Floor" but does not reveal the paths.

...Knew it wouldn't be that easy.

Anyway, for a simple tour of the city to suddenly turn into a dungeon exploration campaign, if this were a tabletop RPG, it would make me worry about the Game Master's state of mind.

Hey, enough about that, the beastgirls are looking restless.

I should at least take care of that first.

Let's start with introducing myself.

"I am Satou, traveling merchant."

"Cat~"

"Dog *nano desu*."

"I'm Lizard."

Are those names?

Other than Urs, seems like their previous owner also referred to them this way.

The Dog Ear and the Cat Ear girls have been slaves since infancy, while the Reptilian only became one after coming of age, so she does have a proper name, but it is long and full of fricatives. Quite a mouthful.

In the end, since they asked to be named something simple, I decide to call them “Pochi”, “Tama”, and “Liza”. Some of you might scream: “Don’t treat them as pets!” but if I name them normally, I will certainly mix the names up. These names will only apply while we’re in the dungeon anyways, so forgive me!

Liza’s name doesn’t come from “Lizard”, but from the first two syllables of her real name. ¹

Right, before getting out of here, let’s treat their injuries.

I take out some towels and the waterskin from my bag, as well as the medicinal ointment. It was meant to be a gift for Martha and company, but I can just buy more later.

“Wash and disinfect your wounds with water and this cloth, then apply the ointment and wrap them up. Don’t reuse the same cloth you used for washing, okay?”

The three look confused after being given brand new towels.

Ah, okay. I’m getting the vibe that, in the beginning, if I don’t order them around whenever I talk, they’ll only make blank faces in response. This reminds me of when I took care of a relative’s children.

“What is it? I’ll turn around when you treat your wounds, don’t worry!”

Turns out they’re not embarrassed, but rather surprised about being given quality cloth and ointment.

“Thank you, *nano desu*. It’s okay if you don’t turn around, *nano desu*.”

“Pretty cloth, so happy~”

“Um...the medicine and water, sir, if it was for yourself...um...it would be better if...”

Pochi and Tama undo the linen bands tied at the waist of their shirts, undress without a care, and start the treatment.

Other than their ears and tails, these two are no different from human children.

Pochi sports a brown bob-cut, while Tama has short white hair, and Liza tied up her waist-length red hair at the back.

Liza looks be the more cautious type, so she is hesitant, but when I “order” her to “use them and don’t be bothered by it”, she starts treating her wounds like the other two.

Like the other two, if you don’t look at her beautiful tail and the orange scales on parts of her body, Liza is no different from a human woman.

From what I can see, orange scales cover the area near the root her tail, from her neck to her shoulders, from her elbows to her fingertips, and from her knees to her toes. Judging from her clothing, her breast size is quite disappointing.

As the three finish their treatment, I distribute some pastries. Though these are just pastries, each of them got three palm-sized ones, and should be enough for now. These pastries were bought as gifts when Zena and I went on the tasting tour.

Pochi stares at them drooling, but no one makes a move.

“Don’t be reserved, eat!”

They can’t eat without permission? Like I thought, these slaves were mistreated.

“Delicious—”

“So-, so sweet, so delicious.”

Pochi chokes, and I pass the waterskin to her.

“I won’t take it away, so take your time.”

I kinda feel like a babysitter.

“So there were pastries made with honey...”

Liza seems to be stunned, quite an overreaction for just pastries.



I check the Map again and still, outside of this chamber, nothing is displayed.

Does it not work here? Or is the function blocked?

I open the Menu and cast “Full Map Exploration”. If this doesn’t work, do I have to explore the paths myself?

Such concerns instantly vanish, as the entirety of “Demon’s Dungeon” comes into view. This magic is so convenient combined with the Map. It’s totally Easy Mode.

Now then, despite showing every last path of the dungeon, a flat map is hard to understand, so I switch to 3D mode. In strategy games like WW, elevation is an essential element to victory, so a 3D map is necessary.

It is not only in 3D, but also rotatable, so I can view it from every angle.

Looking at the Map’s three dimensional display, I feel that this place looks less like a dungeon, and more like the inside of an anthill. Branching, tree-like paths leading to chambers, which themselves lead to even more branching paths.

Criss-crossing paths, randomly connected chambers, and countless branches, it really has the air of a dungeon.

Taking a rough survey, I find that there are a hundred fifty-nine people in the dungeon, of which there are seven demi-humans and a hundred fifty-two humans; a quarter of the total are slaves. The riot suppression squadron had about fifty members, now separated in three places.

Zena is in one of those groups, and looking at the Map, I don’t think we will cross paths for now, but she should be fine as long as she stays with her fellow soldiers.

I do wish they would come here actually.

The young priest of Garlion Temple is some place far from Zena, and we would only meet up near the exit.

Personally, I wouldn’t want such a talented person to die here, but even if I leave him alone, he looks like he can survive. It would be great if I do run into him though

Were there some way to communicate, I could guide everyone to the surface. But however convenient this Menu is, it doesn't come with a function to chat with others.

Also, the Eyeball Demon can't be found by searching. There's a conspicuous chamber at the deepest part of the dungeon, which makes me wonder if it is there...

But the dungeon might collapse if that guy is hastily defeated, which wouldn't be funny, so I'll leave it alone for now.

The main enemies are insect-type monsters from Level 10 to 20.

There were only about twenty of them on the first search, but the number increases every time I refresh, now totaling more than a hundred. Frog- and snake-type monsters have also appeared. Without exception, these monsters hold the same title "Primitive Monster". Does that apply to monsters born immediately after the dungeon's creation? The wyvern I saw before didn't have such a title.

There seems to only be one path out of this chamber, so it would be bad if we find ourselves cornered on the way out! Should I give these girls weapons too?

Okay, let's pretend I found something in the shadows, and pull out some spears and swords from Storage!

Having made the decision, I walk towards the path, but the three of them quickly catch up in a panic.

"Don't abandon us! We are willing to do anything!"

"Don't leave us!"

"Sir, you can use us as tools, so please bring us along, I beg you."

I am being desperately begged to stay. Even so, none of them pulled on my clothing. Is it due to their experience as slaves? Or are they trained this way?

“Sorry to have worried you girls, but I was just checking out the path ahead, and won’t abandon you, so relax!”

I do my best to comfort them. Though I feel like they wouldn’t be reassured even if I say that, it’s better than nothing.

While waiting for the three girls to finish their food, I take out a short sword and a magic gun from my bag and equip them.

The magic gun is about the size of a handgun, and uses mana as bullets rather than lead. The power can be adjusted as I like, with the smallest shot requiring only one point of mana, an efficient weapon.

In my case, I recover about three points of mana every second, so I can actually fire it indefinitely. It’s conveniently similar to the default weapon in a first-person shooting game, but there’s a tenth-of-a-second lag after pulling the trigger, which is a little annoying.

Liza is the only one among the three who has a combative skill.

She has the “Long Spear” skill, but it would be too strange to pull one out from the bag, so I give Liza the short sword I took out before. Perhaps not expecting me to let a slave hold a weapon, she is somewhat conflicted, but I insist that she take it.

I will serve as the vanguard, and ask Liza to watch for surprise attacks behind us. Liza herself wishes to be at the front, but I still make her stay back.

The Radar ensures that I would never be taken by surprise, but if I give them something to do, they might forget their uneasiness a little.

The lineup is me, Tama, Pochi, then Liza. “Ordering” them preemptively with a serious tone, I forbid them from taking part in combat without my consent. Since they are only Level 2 or 3, if they got too careless and were attacked by a monster, they would die in one hit.

Basically, this is an escort mission.

The path has the same kind of stone walls as the starting point.

There is no glowing stone floor, so it’s quite dim. Fortunately, there are

glowing stone pillars every few meters. Though they make the shadowy caverns look creepy, it's possible to walk around.

The stone pillars are about waist-height, and annoyingly, the light only reaches chest-level, so the ceiling appears pitch-black.

I'm guessing it is designed to cause uneasiness, how considerate in the worst way.

If the path is too dark, we wouldn't be able to get out of this chamber, but there might be a remedy for that.

"Tama, if you can see something ahead, say it quietly. Pochi, tell me if there is any strange smell or noise. Liza, I'll let you guard the back, but don't focus on it too much and lag behind."

"Yea!"²

"Yes *nano desu!*"

"Yes!"

They still look uneasy, but their answers are firm.

>>> Obtained skill: "Commanding".

>>> Obtained skill: "Organizing".

Yeah, probably skills related to organizing parties. They look useful, so I try adding skill points to them.

Knowledge about how to delegate party members go through my mind. In addition, I can also better grasp each person's position.

Upon entering the path, I see signs of an enemy on the Radar, some distance ahead.

"The smell of blood is coming from ahead, *nano desu.*"

Poking her head out in the dark and sniffing with her nose, Pochi reports to me.

The beeline distance is not far, but it is still five hundred meters ahead on

the path, you sure did well.

I commend Pochi and pet her head. Though I am treating her like a pet, she is wagging her tail like crazy, so she's happy right?

As I approach, I check out the enemy on the Map, and it is Level 20, without any special abilities. It attacks by tackling and biting. There's only one, over at the next chamber.

Suddenly thinking of this, I take note of the girls' statuses, and I am a little shocked by the entry for experience, really... This is a game. The experience is shown as a percentage, so I don't know the exact numbers, but I can tell approximately how much they need for the next level, which is convenient.

The experience of everyone else on the map is not visible. Is this only limited to my party? Or is there some other condition?

I can see light leaking from the chamber ahead.

Holding back the three of them, I peek inside the chamber. Not paying me any mind, the large insect enemy is single-mindedly munching on **something**, well... you already know I can't stand gore.

If I lose too, would I be eaten like that? Even if it seems impossible to lose considering the level difference, I'm not prepared.

I wonder how the protagonists in stories can fight so courageously.

The smell of blood, coming from upwind, has crushed my weak heart. It would probably be fine to camp at the first room, waiting for help to come.

"Sir, pardon my insolence. I'm wondering, should we go around the monster as it consumes its victim, or attack it from behind?"

Liza speaks wearily. Even Liza is afraid, and her limbs are trembling slightly.

Even a girl with a single digit level is thinking about what to do, maybe I am being too pessimistic. In a place like this, rescue would never come anyways.

I still can't fight it up close, so let's snipe it with the magic gun from afar! If I use the magic gun that can shatter rocks at full power, that large

monster can be defeated right?

Under the covers of chewing noises, I fire the magic gun. Of course, it is set at maximum power.

The first shot missed, but the monster insect didn't seem to notice the attempt on its life. Just like when I had fired at rocks, I didn't obtain a shooting skill.

The bullet of the magic gun glows a little, so it's possible to see the track in the darkness. The second shot still doesn't hit, but I am able to adjust my aim, hitting the monster with the third shot as it changes position.

With the power set to maximum, the hind leg that was struck explodes at the joint. Without letting it get closer, I keep firing and take down the enormous monster **Camelback Cricket**.

The concerns I had seem laughable now, in the face of overwhelming victory.

>>> Obtained skill: "Shooting".

>>> Obtained skill: "Sniping".

>>> Obtained skill: "Aiming".

>>> Obtained title: "Insect Slayer".

Sheesh, it's a large camelback cricket, but it's showing up outside a desert...

"Super awesome."

"Strong~"

Thanks to the magic gun, I am being showered with praise.

Pochi and Tama are just excited, while Liza seems to think it's strange.

"With that strange wand, did you use magic, sir?"

"It's a magic weapon. Don't tell anyone!"

Well, just to prevent tattling. Though Liza nods with a strange expression, Pochi and Tama joyfully reply “Yeah!”, so I should remind them again when we get out of the dungeon.

Midway down the severed leg of the camelback cricket, it starts to look less like a rod and more like a spear.

Unlike a normal insect, it is giving an impression of being artificial.

Right, could this become a makeshift spear?

With the magic gun, I first break off the leg where it starts to become a rod.

If I leave it at that, the claw at the tip would swivel around, so I take out a plank and a leather belt to secure it. The cut-off end is leaking green fluid, so I recycle a cloth used to wash wounds to tie it up.

>>> Obtained skill: “Dissection”.

>>> Obtained skill: “Entomology”.

>>> Obtained skill: “Teratology³”.

>>> Obtained skill: “Weapon Crafting”.

>>> Obtained skill: “Leathercraft”.

>>> Obtained skill: “Woodwork”.

Like always, they are easily obtained.

The spear I just made looks like it will break after stabbing an enemy once, so I decide to maximize the Craft Weapon skill, then remake the spear.

Using knowledge given by the Entomology, Teratology, and Weapon Crafting skills, I make a cut on the remaining half of the Camelback Cricket leg, and forcefully snap it.

Eww, that felt disgusting.

I shave down the spear-like part of the leg with a short sword. This sword is also a magic item, and it’s very sharp, more so than the weapons that soldiers use.

The tip was held together by wood and leather belt before, but now I will

secure it with another part of the cricket.

By putting together the freshly exposed surfaces of live tissue when binding, they will fuse thanks to the monster's ability to regenerate. Does this work even when the monster is dead? I feel skeptical, but when I applied it as directed by my skills, they really fused together.

Just in case, I use the leather rope to reinforce it.

It feels like I'm fooling around, but since the result is a spear loads better than the first attempt, let's go with it!

I turn around to give the finished Camelback Cricket spear to Liza, but I see her wedging her short sword into the gap between the Camelback Cricket's head and back, trying to do something.

...Is she hungry?

"Liza, you'll get a stomachache from eating that!"

"Tha-, that's not it. The monster has a core, and I'm trying to remove it..."

Core?

"What is a core?"

"A core can be turned into money, and there's one in every monster. We can exchange for a lot of things with traveling merchants."

Liza's answer is a little different from what I wanted to hear. Maybe I shouldn't have expected a Wikipedia-level answer.

Liza takes out a dirtied spherical object from the carcass that is bleeding green, and it looks like a fist-sized reddish ball. It's a mucky red, so even being optimistic, I don't think it can be used in jewelry.

I take out a linen bag from my bag, and give it to Liza on her way back. I also give her a piece of cloth, so she can wipe the blood off of herself.

"Put the core into this bag, and take this spear."

I let Pochi hold the bag, and give the Camelback Cricket Spear to Liza, while the short sword she had is passed to Tama. Exchanging equipment, this is exactly like an RPG.

Despite getting a short sword, Tama can't quite use it with her arms chained. Is the chain connected to her collar too restrictive?

Right, why not use this to break it?

I call Liza over, and pulling to the chain on her collar to the side, then shoot it with the magic gun at the lowest setting.

I break Pochi and Tama's chains the same way... Did I scare them? Their ears are drooping, so I tell them "Sorry" apologetically and caress their heads.

I put the broken chains into a bag, and give it to Pochi to keep with the bag for cores.

"Liza, starting with the next enemy, I will let Pochi and Tama take turns removing the core, so tell them the location and the method."

"Yes, understood."

"Understood~, *nano desu.*"

"Yea~"

Being motivated is better than anything.

Also, I got a bit curious, so I ask Pochi:

"Right, Pochi."

"Yes, *nano desu.*"

"You don't have to force yourself to say 'nano desu', you know?"

"If I don't add 'nano desu' I'll be punished, *nano desu.*"

I see, is she saying it because she thinks it's proper? I'm only their temporary owner, so it's fine if I don't correct it right?

"I understand, but I won't be angry if you don't add it, so just talk how you like."

"Yes...*nano desu.*"

Putting my hands together in front of the victim of the Camelback Cricket and praying "*Namo...*"⁴ for them to rest in peace, I leave the chamber. I note the name of the deceased though.

Comparing their statuses from before the battle and now, I can only see a slight decrease in their stamina, and no difference in any other stat.

So they won't gain experience just standing next to me? The percentage of their experience shows no change.

Then how do people from supply units and priests gain levels?

If the level of these three can increase somewhat, when running into others on the way out, I can hide my own strength, but it doesn't seem to be that easy.

If this works like a game, why not play it like one?

"Tama, if there are rocks about the size of a Core, pick one up."

"Yea!"

The road ahead has a fork, and although they lead to the same place, one side has a chamber in the middle. Both sides have monsters, but after two Level 10 Caterpillars on the side with the chamber, there is a survivor.

...Do we save them?

"The road split~, meow."

Just as the fork enters her view, Tama immediately reports. She didn't have to use a strange sentence ending for character.

I praise Tama, and caress her head. She seems to be quite pleased.

Pochi look a little envious of her, so I also pat her head.

Their heads come up to my chest level, which make them easy to pet, so they're about 110 cm tall? Liza is taller than I am—165 cm or so.

“Let’s go right!”

We advance into the path. Judging from the Radar, those things should be visible now right?

“Bugs up there—*nano desu*.”

Tama warns. Imitating Pochi this time?

Alright, how should I attack enemies I can’t see.

...Oh, I have an idea. I’m not sure if it will work, but let’s try.

Getting their rough location on the Radar, I look into that direction.

Next, the names and levels of the monsters pop up on the AR.

Awesome! I repeatedly fire indiscriminately into the area around near the text with the magic gun, with the setting at minimum.

One shot connects, and a Caterpillar falls down with a “splat”.

“Tama, throw rocks at it.”

Tama makes three throws, two of which bounce off after landing on the Caterpillar, while only one does damage.

The Caterpillar slowly inches closer.

“Pochi, Tama, get back. Liza, up front. Just once, attack that thing from behind me!”

Kicking as light as I could, I deflect the Caterpillar’s tackle, and make an opening. I must say, it feels like kicking a dodgeball.

As I did that, Liza attacks with the butt of the spear, since I had ordered her to use that end for now, because the tip isn’t fully secure yet. Even so, the Caterpillar’s health drops a little.

Having confirmed that, I fire the magic gun several times, putting down the Caterpillar.

I just noticed, unlike back at the Dragon’s Canyon, the remains of defeated monsters aren’t automatically collected in Storage.

“Liza, Tama, I’ll let you recover the core. Pochi, follow me, there’s one more ahead.”

Tama passes Pochi a rock from a mountain of them. Tama...how many did you pick up?

Inside the chamber, there is the same kind of Caterpillar monster as before.

There are also the **bodies** of a young woman and a slave-looking young boy. Unlike the Camelback Cricket’s victim, they have not been munched on.

“Pochi, go inside then throw rocks from the side, and once you run out of rocks go back to Liza and Tama.”

I casually stroll into the chamber, and start shooting with the magic gun.

Pochi throws two rocks at it as ordered, and both hit their mark. But after being thrown at, the Caterpillar turns towards Pochi and spits out venom.

Pochi’s predicament sends a chill down my spine, but I quickly lunge forward and kick the Caterpillar on the side of its head, deflecting the shot. I used more force than intended, and the kick crushes the Caterpillar’s head, taking it down. The sensation on my foot felt a bit disgusting.

I managed to prevent the venom from hitting Pochi, but startled by it, she runs out into the path.

Specifically, the path opposite the one we came from.

She probably mixed them up in confusion.

“Pochi, stop!”

I immediately go after her, but having to go around the Caterpillar, I was one step late.

“NOO~GET AWAY, GET AWAY~!”

Huh? Who's that? It's not Pochi's voice. It's the man in the path ahead!
Looking at the Radar, he's in a bad spot.

"Pochi, stop!"

I catch up to her, picking her up by the nape.

I thought I saw the man's figure at the corner ahead, but before I can catch up, the dot representing the man on the Radar vanishes.

Hmm, why did that man run?

Did he mistake Pochi for some monster?

Or did he feel guilty for the Caterpillar's victims in that chamber...

Regardless, this dungeon is more dangerous than I thought, and if I'm not more careful about the safety of these kids, it's no good.

"Sir! Are you alright!"

"Alright~?"

Liza and Tama run up hurriedly.

"Yeah, I'm fine, you can go back to the chamber and recover the core!"

"I'm sorry, *nano desu*."

Pochi apologizes with drooping ears, while her tail is tucked between her legs. I'm not mad at Pochi's mistake, but she might be in danger if she panics again, so is it better to scold her a little?

"Pochi, when it becomes dangerous like that, it's fine to run. But you can't panic, got that?"

"...Yes, *nano desu*."

I pat her head hanging down despondently, comforting her.

>>> Title obtained: "Trainer".

How rude, calling it training. It's just education.

Going back to the chamber, I am greeted by the sight of Liza and Tama cutting apart a giant caterpillar. It feels a little surreal.

I take note of the name of the three deceased people, while feeling conflicted about whether to check the bodies for anything useful. I don't have the resolve to touch the bodies no matter what, and as I am hesitating, Liza notices and directs Pochi to do so.

"Strip the clothing too?"

"Take the shoes, but leave the clothing."

Pochi is asking, but do we even need the clothes? I ordered her to take the shoes only because I now realize the beastgirls aren't wearing any.

Pochi gives me the recovered items. The young boy slave had nothing on him, but the woman had a purse, a ring, a necklace, and such accessories.

I create a folder for things victims had on them in Storage, and one with the woman's name under that, then place those items inside. If she has family, I'll give those to them. Suddenly thinking of it, I also cut a lock of hair from those two and add them to the folder.

I let Pochi and Tama put on the recovered shoes.

The more resilient Liza will have to wait. Since in the chamber with a giant snake ahead, there should be shoes left behind by the young man, so she shouldn't wait long.

Even if it didn't do much damage, the experiment to have them try attacking seems to be a success. Tama and Liza went up by one level, and Pochi by two.

It seems like whenever they gain a level, they automatically learn skills. Pochi obtained "Throwing", Tama "Collecting", and Liza "Dissecting".

Uh, Liza's skills look odd.

The Long Spear skill is shown in white, but Dissect is in gray. Pochi and Tama's skills are also gray.

If these skills are displayed the same way as mine, they're probably not

enabled yet right? Once they are enabled, the combat potential would increase a lot. Unfortunately, I can only see my party members' skills but not adjust them like in some console game.

There are still more than a hundred rooms before the exit anyway, so one step at a time.

I lead the beastgirls to the next chamber.



We passed six rooms after that, but didn't see anyone alive. There were many corpses though.

"Goshujin-sama, the cores have been recovered."

"Alright, then take a break."

I take a drink from the waterskin, and pass it to Liza.

At some point, she started to address me as "goshujin-sama" instead of "sir"⁵. Seems like she is more comfortable with that, so I'll let it slide.

Liza tries to pull out the stopper on the waterskin but drops it instead, and water pours out from it, forming a puddle.

"Ple-, please forgive me! Goshujin-sama!"

Liza desperately tries to pick up the waterskin. Her movements appear dull.

That reminds me, in the last battle, the accuracy of Pochi and Tama's throws were pretty low!

"Tired?"

"Please forgive me! I spilled precious water, so please punish me. Anything is fine."

What an overreaction—no, Liza really seems to think it was a grave error. Did I not say it is a bottomless waterskin? I would think you had noticed

by now.

Enough about that, I should really check on their health.

“Liza, we can just collect more water later. More importantly, how are you feeling?”

“Please forgive me, but my body has been feeling heavy, and I can’t move with accuracy.”

Seemingly without even the strength to take a drink, Pochi and Tama fall to the ground.

“Then not just a break, let’s rest for a while.”

I pick up Pochi and Tama, and let them drink water.

There are no more pastries left, so I take out some sliced jerky from Storage.

I picked this out because it looks relatively more palatable than the other non-perishable foodstuff in the loot from the beginning. It’s made from the meat of Sky Deer which I have never heard of, but at least it is some sort of deer.

I’m losing these three to drowsiness. But were they very hungry? Once I put the jerky in front of them, they start wolfing it down like they might accidentally bite their fingers.

“So tasty~?”

“Delicious!”

“Ahh, this jerky. The sweet taste is spreading in my mouth when I bite down, so satisfying.”

Um, I didn’t think it was that delicious.

“Jerky? Tasty~”

“Very tasty! Meat is the best *nano desu!*”

Liza is still slowly enjoying her first bite. She sure likes her meat.
There are dozens of kilograms of jerky, so I give them good portions.

“When you finish, sleep for three hours.”

With seemingly satisfied expressions, Pochi and Tama scrunch up next to me and fall asleep. Liza sits down where she can watch over the two.

“Allow me to keep watch.”

Liza proposes, but she is totally dozing off. I again order her to sleep, and she finally relaxes and lies down to take a nap.

I observe their statuses as they slept.

An hour and a half after they began resting, the originally gray skills turn white.

I suppose their level ups only apply when sleeping.

The process is almost exactly like a certain classic dungeon game, where fatigue always increases outside of the barn, which worries me.⁶

Anyways, how come these three gained skills only by leveling up? Gaining skills immediately based on some action like me, is such a thing unusual?

We have advanced through several more chambers. When we rested last time, it was at the point of exhaustion after gaining three levels, so we should take another break after two more chambers.

“Stop!”

How rare for Tama not to drag out her words when she warns us.
But there aren’t any enemies?

“What is it?”

“The ground~ is weird?”

The answer is a question. Something is weird, but I don't know what that something is, you know? I stare intently, and the ground does seem to hold some secret.

Before I can figure out the oddity with my eyes, the AR display reveals it to be a "Trap: Life Absorption".

It's a dungeon after all, and traps should be a given. We haven't encountered one so far though, so I had forgotten about them.

"Well done, Tama—There's a trap, watch out!"

"Yea!"

As I caress Tama's head and cat ears, I warn Pochi and Liza with the latter half of my sentence.

With those three behind me, I throw a rock at the trap, but it doesn't activate. Judging from the name, the trap probably only reacts to living things.

Since the active area isn't shown, so I'm not sure whether it's safe to go around. Letting one of the beastgirls test it is out of the question.

Even by consulting the Map, I can't tell if there is a safe zone.

It reacts to life signs, so could I bait it with monsters?

Thankfully, there are some rat monsters in the chamber this path leads to, so let's try to lure some out by throwing rocks.

Taking some rocks from Tama, I toss three of them in succession.

"Rats coming~"

Hearing Tama's report, I make the three stand back. These rats are only Level 10 and fairly weak, but they act in groups of two to four. There could be a few that make it through the trap, so I put some distance between us.

Rather than being caught by some mechanism, these rats are trapped by black sparks. In the end, all three rats fell for the trap, so it seems like there were at least three traps in this path.

>>> Obtained skill: "Trap Disarming".

>>> Obtained skill: "Trap Abuse".

>>> Obtained skill: "Trap Discovery".

There are various trap-related skills and they all look useful, so I quickly add skill points and enable them.



Liza thrusts at the giant frog with all of her strength.

Pochi distracts it by attacking with a stick from one side, while Tama deals the finishing strike from the other by stabbing her short sword into the frog's eye.

"Great! Good job!"

"Yes!"

"Yea~"

"Nano desu!"

I praise the three for defeating the first monster by themselves.

The opponent was only Level 10, and only had Tongue Binding as its only special attack, so I let them confront it themselves, and the fight went smoothly. Like I expected, beastpeople have better combat potential than humans of the same level!

In terms of height and width, the hall here is three times the size of all other chambers so far. Though it's large enough to be hiding more enemies, no dots are showing on the Radar.

There is a house at the end of this hall, or more accurately a house split into two even halves. It was probably sucked in when the dungeon was created! There are unfortunately no sign of people on the Radar.

Liza is cutting the frog apart, while Pochi and Tama are keeping watch at the exit.

Is it Liza's turn this time? Since it's a matter of skill proficiency, I let them take turns with their roles.

"Pochi, Tama, we'll check out that house, follow me."

I made sure on the Map that there aren't any enemies nearby, so no need to stand guard! I bring the two of them to the house.

There is no one dead or alive inside, but there are various items. Looks like the secret stash house of some wealthy person.

Upon entering, the lighting automatically turns on. Is it magic? Seems like I can remove them, so I take one bulb down, which soon extinguishes. It's probably meant for indoor use only.

What I first lay my eyes on are two ceremonial short swords hanging on the wall. When I check the AR display, these turn out to have unexpectedly good quality, so they're also practical. Their size is appropriate, so I'll give them to Pochi and Tama!

In some cliché development, I find a hidden safe behind a painting on the wall. I destroy the lock with the magic gun, open it, and check inside. Other than jewels and bags of gold coins, there is also an amount of some magical ingredient loaded into vials.

Was the owner an alchemist?

Confirming my hypothesis, we find several bottle of magical potions somewhere else, so there's no doubt.

Furthermore, there are some spellbooks and a magic scroll on the shelves.

I don't know how to use the scroll, but there seems to be an explanation in one of the books next to it. When the beastgirls take their rest, I'll peruse them and search for the method!

I recover the sizable jewel accessories, but leave behind the large items like art pieces. Though the Storage does have infinite capacity, it would be a hassle to organize if I mindlessly grab everything.

Only the stands remain of two preserved specimens on display.

Though it's none of my business, they're in maintenance right? I would really like to see specimens of fantastic creatures.

>>> Skill obtained: "Excavation".

>>> Skill obtained: "Treasure Discovery".

>>> Skill obtained: "Locked Chest Picking".

I find a magical lighter in the kitchen. It's the only magic item here, but I also take a pan, a pot, and utensils for four loaded into a linen bag.

Since there is a large jar of water, to prepare for meeting others, I take out a regular waterskin from Storage and filled it.

As for numerous beer-bottle sized clay pots, I pour in oil into them for makeshift Molotov cocktails, and keep them in Storage.

"Here, it smells like jerky! *Nano desu—*"

Pochi announces in a sing-song voice, so I go to her. I see a closet full of food beyond a pile of toppled furniture, while Pochi and Tama are peeking their heads between the gaps.

It looks dangerous, so I pull them back, then remove the furniture one by one to make a path.

Inside the food closet, we uncover three loaves of rye bread, cheese, and smoked meat. There are also barrels of what seems to be high quality wine, which I stash away in Storage while the two are distracted by the meat.

"Pochi, Tama, do you want a taste?"

"Yea~"

"Yes *nano desu!*"

Having confirmed that they have not spoiled on the AR, I cut slices of cheese and smoked meat then pass them to Pochi and Tama.

"Deliciouciou~"

"Nom~ So good, so fulfilling *nano desu!*"

Do Pochi and Tama think wagging their tails isn't sufficient? They're even waving their hands clutching food to express their joy.

I also try a slice of cheese. It's good, with a nice cheddar-like sharpness.

"Share the rest with Liza!"

"Liza will be happy~"

"That's right *nano desu*! Liza should eat it too!"

I give the bag of food to Tama, and the one with weapons and other things to Pochi, while I hold the water jar and a tub. Those two and I return to the hall where Liza is waiting.

When we come out, the core recovery has been finished, and Liza was planning on joining us.

"Goshujin-sama, I have a request... May I build a fire?"

"A fire underground? What for?"

Liza is proactively making the request, so I ask for a reason.

"I want to grill that frog's meat... Sorry."

"No need to apologize, but is it really edible?"

"Yes, definitely. In the past, I had similar large frogs for food, and though the entrails are poisonous, those parts can be avoided. If it's not cooked first, there's a bigger chance of poison, so..."

After squirming for a bit, Liza answers.

Despite being underground, air is flowing, and we're much closer to the surface now, so no need to worry about running out of air.

"Alright, I will allow it."

Liza directs Pochi and Tama to cut up the frog leg, while she takes out pieces of wood and starts laying them down. I see, did she collect all the wood she found on the way for this purpose?

I stop Liza from using the flint to start the fire, and take out the magical lighter to do so instead.

With magical lighter like this, there's no way to investigate the mechanism, but it seems to be designed to be used by anyone.

I give Liza the kitchen tools and utensils to Liza.

Soon enough, Pochi and Tama return with the leg meat raised above their heads.

"Meat~"

"Nano desu~"

They look more thrilled about this than the smoked meat. Are their feral instincts at work?

Liza slices the meat, and line them up on the pan to fry.

First she uses the fatty parts to grease the pan, then after removing the fat, she fries the meat. A fragrance like chicken grilling pervades, which smells appetizing if I didn't know anything.

Perhaps getting impatient, Pochi and Tama squint their eyes, and starts sniffing.

Soon, the frog meat is ready, and Liza stabs a slice on a stick, and extends it to me.

Knew it, I have to eat this? I have to—

"Thank you, Liza."

I steel myself and bite down—It tastes light like chicken, well, too light, actually. Man, should I sprinkle some salt? It's too much trouble to go back to the house to look for spices, so I try searching the Storage, but there isn't even pepper.

The three are staring at me eat.

Right, waiting for my permission?

“Stop looking and eat. If you don’t eat well and rest, you won’t last long enough to get out of the dungeon!”

Having gotten permission, Pochi and Tama start eating slices from the pan. Liza is also eating while she cooks. Are there slices with bone mixed in? They’re making scary crunching sounds, but everyone seems to be enjoying it.

As I watch them, I quietly eat some rye bread, cheese, and smoked meat. No, even if it tastes okay, frog meat is a little...

For the next thirty minutes, the cycle of cutting, frying and eating repeats thrice more, and when the fire burns out, the feast is over.

Following Liza’s suggestion, I wrap a piece of meat up in a cloth to go as a precaution.

According to previous experience, they won’t last even a couple of fights, so I order them to rest for the third time while they are still full.

I let the three wash up in the tub I brought, and have them change into clean clothes found in the house before sleeping.

They’ll get dirty as soon as they fight, but isn’t it more comfortable to sleep all clean?

They seem to have gotten used to me now. Pochi and Tama are using my knees as pillows to sleep, and while Liza probably wouldn’t be willing to use me as support, she is huddled up next to me.

Oh yeah, while they sleep, why not go through the spellbooks I found?

Immediately when I view the spellbooks in Storage, a new option called “Browse” appears, and I select it. Just like in a game, I can browse the contents of a book that’s still kept inside Storage.

There’s something I haven’t thought about. The Menu’s displays are clearly visible even in dim lighting. I wonder if it’s a projection on my retina, or a construct in my mind.

What if—I do a search in a flash of inspiration, and just like in a game, it turns out that the text of a book I open can be searched. So convenient! I don’t even need OCR!

On the matter of scrolls, only one of the spellbooks have a few relevant lines.

According to it, I can use a scroll just by unraveling it and announcing the name of the spell.

The scroll I found before seems to be a fire-attribute attack magic called “Fireball”. It is Fire Magic, but it’s only one of the most basic spells learned in offensive magic.

Thanks to the discovery, while everyone slept, I can kill time while reading.



After resting once more, we were able to traverse eight-tenths of the way to the dungeon exit.

Pochi and Tama’s equipments have been changed to the ceremonial short swords and bucklers found in the stash house.

Those are the only changes in equipment, but all three of them have gotten to Level 13. Pochi gained the skills “One-Handed Sword”, “Throwing”, “Enemy Detection”, and “Dissection”; Tama “One-Handed Sword”, “Throwing”, “Collecting”, and “Dissection”; and Liza “Long Spear”, “Spear Thrust”, “Cooking”, and “Dissection”.

An extraordinary increase in combat potential compared to the start.

Outside of enemies with status affliction attacks, these three can defeat even enemies five levels higher by working together. Since they have no one to serve as the tank, it would be dangerous to go up against multiple enemies that aren’t about the same level, but that shouldn’t happen much.

We discover a slime in the path ahead. It’s not the raindrop-shaped kind from some national RPG⁸, but rather a sticky, amoeba-like classical slime.

Since I have the chance, I try out the Fire Magic scroll.

I use the “Fireball” scroll according to the directions written in the spellbook, and a tiny fireball the size of a fingertip appears, then shoots toward the slime at the speed of a child tossing a ball.

Striking the slime, the fireball merely burns a little goo at the surface before vanishing, and checking the slime's health bar, I only see a slight drop. Against a Level 10 slime, this is of no use.

Since I also gained the skill Fire Magic when casting Fireball, it wasn't a total loss.

In addition, Fireball has been added to the list of usable spells.

Well, in terms of efficiency, the magic gun has a longer range and is more convenient, so let's give up on Fireball! It might be helpful when I don't have the magical lighter though.

Perhaps thinking that I am upset, Liza makes a suggestion.

"Goshujin-sama, pardon my insolence, but when attacking a slime, you have to aim for its nucleus."

"What do you mean?"

"The nucleus is where the color is slightly different."

Is it different from a core? Speaking of which, despite being translucent, no red core is visible, so is it not a monster?

Anyway, I look carefully at the spot Liza is pointing toward, and there really is a darker spot about half the size of my fist.

"By attacking a slime's nucleus—"

As we are casually talking, Liza, with just one stab of her spear, defeats the slime that was slowly wiggling closer.

"—it can be defeated easily like this."

"Didn't get my turn~"

"It shrunk and melted *nano desu*."

Pochi and Tama were eager to fight the slime, so they are disappointed about not getting a chance. Actually, Pochi just seems to be sad that the slime turned into water, and now she's poking at the puddle with her short

sword.

By the way, ever since the second-to-last break, we never found any more bodies, not to mention survivors. The larger groups are still there, but some smaller groups are gone, probably done in by monsters.

“That wall—is weird?”

Tama finds an odd-looking part of the wall.

It's a trapdoor. Checking the Map, I indeed find a hidden path behind it.

Hmm, something's weird. I rotate the Map, trying to get a bird's eye view.

That path starts at a chamber fifteen meters above and goes straight down for about three hundred, so rather than some sort of vertical cave, with a width of only three meters, isn't it a pitfall trap?

If this were a game, it would be a shortcut that leads to a place deeper down.

It's dangerous to haphazardly get close, so I have Tama mark it with charcoal.

There's a four-way intersection after this chamber, and the path directly ahead leads to a chamber with three survivors. Since they were there since our break an hour ago, they're probably hiding out in a safe zone.

There are only five more rooms to the exit, but they wouldn't know without a map, so they probably thought they were stuck.

“Everyone stop!”

Displayed as a red dot on the Radar, an enemy approaches with alarming speed. There's only one, so let's confront it in the previous chamber!

We retreat as I check the enemy's status.

Undead Beast, an undead-type monster. Weakness: Holy attribute. Its skills are Vertical Movement and Charge.

I am surprised after continuing to read its data.

“It’s Level 40...?”

It’s stronger than any enemy seen so far, is it the dungeon’s sweeper?

This is just like a classic game! When the time is up, an impossibly strong enemy shows up to kill the players.⁹

With me rushing the three, we manage to arrive at the room before confronting the enemy. I make them hide in the corner. This thing is no joke, they would be destroyed in a second if I let them fight.

Emerging from the path, a five meters long, two meters tall towering jaguar-like monster with a ruby red horn on its forehead.

—The Undead Beast vanishes from my sight.

I check the Map in a panic, but it doesn’t seem to have moved.

From above! By bouncing off the ceiling after jumping, it’s going to tackle me!

My shoulders take the impact of that thing’s forepaws, and my back hits the ground, seemingly cracking it, which wouldn’t be funny if I didn’t have Pain Resistance enabled when I entered the dungeon!

Also, despite being an undead monster, it’s way too fast! If I allow it to bounce around as it like, I wouldn’t be able to protect the beastgirls. I grab its legs tightly.

—Perhaps due to the effects of a certain skill, I recall the trapdoor seen earlier.

Does the Undead Beast not have a sense of pain? Even though I am crushing its legs, it is trying to bite me like nothing is wrong.

Being bitten by those enormous fangs? No thanks.

I dig my foot into its abdomen, then with a *tomoe nage*¹⁰, I throw it at the wall.

When it lands on the wall—stomping in an attempt to retaliate—it breaks through it and falls in just like that.

The Trap Abuse skill saves the day.



Alright, isn't it time to meet up with the survivors?

As soon as we pass the intersection, the ground becomes covered with sticky white thread.

"Sticky sticky~"

"My foot is stuck *nano desu*."

"Is it spider thread?"

The spider thread becomes denser the closer we get to the chamber, so I have Pochi and Tama help clear it with their short swords

Seven cocoon-like objects are in the chamber, probably containing the three survivors. Shall we get them out before the spider comes back?

As we approach the cocoons, seemingly detecting our presence, the people inside start struggling.

Let's check who's inside before rescuing them!

Nidoren. Slave trader, forty years old, Level 10, with the skills "Negotiation", "Training", and "Calculation".

Viscount Jin Belton. Nobleman, thirty-three years old, Level 15, with the skills "Fire Magic", "Flame Magic¹¹", and "Mannerism". Seems like he's serving as the army's consultant regarding magicians.

Lastly, a young man with no job, Level 3, no skills. Maybe a NEET?

The viscount looks like he can battle, but what was a noble doing in that plaza?

Anyway, I decide to split up the work to free them. I save the viscount, Liza the merchant, and Pochi and Tama the young man.

When we are halfway done peeling the cocoon off their victims, the radar catches the sign of the spider approaching from below. There seems to be holes like the one that swallowed the Undead Beast earlier.

"Enemy's here! Pochi, Tama, Liza, pause the rescue for now, get ready to fight!"

The beast girls quickly take out their weapons and get in formation. Thanks to surviving fight after fight, they have gotten used to working together.

Thankfully, the people awaiting rescue still have their face covered, so they can't make noise.

The spider crawls out of a hole in the ground.

First, I throw a rock at it to get its attention, while Liza pierce its head to stop its movements, then Pochi and Tama go for the gaps between its legs and abdomen with their short swords.

If it would die after the first rush, that would be great. But it still lives even after having its head pierced, as expected of a monster.

Liza holds her spear horizontally to defend against the spider's raised leg, while Pochi and Tama take the chance to attack with their short swords, shaving down the spider's health.

Seems like this will take a while, so I quietly flick a coin through its heart for the finishing blow.

Since I timed it with Liza's strike, no one notices.

Tama goes to recover the core, and the rest of us go back to rescuing.

"You were a huge help. I am Viscount Jin Belton, head of the Belton House that has been established since the time of Our Founder Yamato. If we can escape from here, I won't hold back on your reward!"

"Thank you, Lord Viscount, I am Satou, a traveling merchant."

As we finished our introductions, I have also completed the Viscount's rescue. I give the waterskin to the viscount, then go help the others.

"Thank you for saving me. I am Nidoren, a merchant. The ladies might hold some opinion against me, as I am in the slave trade."

"I am Satou, a traveling Merchant from far away."

"A traveling merchant? I thought for sure you were an adventurer."

While giving Nidoren some water, I ask:

“This is the first time I’ve heard of the adventurer profession, what do they do?”

“Well...ahh! Don’t they call them ‘Explorers’ in Shiga Kingdom? They defeat monsters in dungeons, and collect Cores and treasures, quite a profitable yet deadly career!”

I see, so there are game-like professions?

“Humph, don’t touch me, beastwoman. Give me that short sword, I’ll do it myself!”

“Y-, you can’t *nano desu*. This short sword belongs to Goshujin *nano desu*.”

“What! You mere beastwoman dare defy me!”

Pochi is being harassed by the young man she’s trying to save, so I go help her.

Hmph, what a conceited guy. I remember that blond hair, so he’s the guy who kicked the lumber-carrying Pochi on the eastside before.

“Pochi, come.”

“Yes *nano desu*.”

I hug Pochi who has gotten teary from being scolded, and caress her head. She is nuzzling her face on my belly, which feels tickly, but I’ll let her be!

“Hey! Get me out quick!”

“Sorry, don’t want to. You can just stay there and get eaten by a monster. You already have a free hand, so just get out yourself!”

Of course, I am not serious. Just scaring him a little

You made Pochi cry, so I’ll have you try being scared shitless.

“Hey! Cut it out! Get me out quick!”

“Silence, commoner. If your blabbering attracts any monsters, I’ll turn you into charcoal, and even your bones will be cinder when I’m done.”

Viscount Belton further admonishes the arrogant young man who doesn’t know his place.

Despite not being too old, he has quite the strong will. I knew someone who has always had servants would have a different attitude.

The task of cutting loose the now-silenced young man, falls to Nidoren. He nimbly uses his own thin short sword to cut the threads. In the middle of doing so, he whispers something in the young man’s ear, who then tones down his mumbling.

Maybe he’s more experienced with this?

As I admire him, I receive the recovered red core from Tama.

“The cores here have high quality! Ones as red as these don’t show up on the market often.”

According to Nidoren, cores are used in the construction of magic tools. The better the core, the more efficiently it converts mana, and high quality magic tools can be made with it.

I ask the beast girls to get the deceased people’s things from the remaining cocoons, and in the meantime I give the survivors some food. Not the frog meat of course.

Though the Viscount complains about the simple food, he eats it all, perhaps too hungry to resist.

Some cheap weapons and equipment were found inside the victims’ cocoons, which I give to Nidoren and the Viscount. The young man has piped down after Nidoren’s advice, so I let him have a weapon just in case. This way, our combat potential has raised a little.

In the end, I must admit, I was being too optimistic.

“I can’t waste my spells on small fry like this. My magic is reserved for strong enemies.”

“I can at least defend myself, but don’t count on me for combat.”

The Viscount finds some reason not to use magic, and Nidoren also declares himself a non-combatant. Both of them have excuses, and don’t participate in the fights.

No offense to Nidoren, but I was anticipating the viscount’s magic!

Actually, the young man is frustrating me more. Seems like after getting a bronze short sword and buckler, he has become too excited—

“Hey! If the beastkids can fight, I’ll be even better! Something like that spider, I’ll beat them till they beg for mercy!”

—And so he declares, attacking a monster, but is almost effortlessly cut down by his opponent.

The enemy is only a Level 10 Skeleton Soldier, and before it can deal a death blow, Pochi intervenes and blocks the Skeleton Soldier’s baton, saving the young man.

“Liza, if you would.”

“Yes.”

Acknowledging my order, Liza brandishes her spear. The first strike breaks the Skeleton Soldier’s stance, the second shatters its sword arm, and the third destroys its skull.

Despite not having had eyes, the now headless Skeleton Soldier flails wildly as if suddenly blinded. Pochi and Tama join in at this time, and the beastgirls’ Skeleton subjugation ends with one-sided victory.

Anyway, it’s the first time I see skeletal monsters, but how do they move? Is the core their source of power?

To look after the young man groaning on the ground, I ask Nidoren.

“You alright?”

“Ouch, I didn’t think the skeleton monster was such a tough opponent.”

“You might have broken ribs.”

I ignore the cursing young man, and get a prognosis from the slave trader. With broken ribs, isn’t it better not to move him? But what do we do then?

“Ow! Will I die like this?”

“If Pochi didn’t help, you would have died on the spot with a staff strike to your brain.”

Toward his savior Pochi, he hasn’t said a word of gratitude, not to mention apology for before. I don’t plan on tolerating his cowardice.

“Damn! Damn! Damn! I will survive. How can I die here?”

While spitting out blood, the young man spitefully complains.

“Hmph, abandon him if he can’t walk himself! It’s more important to meet up with the riot suppression squad right now. Commoner, the consequence of foolhardiness is death. He did this to himself, leave him!”

Whoa, the Viscount is ruthless! Unlike me, he’s being serious.

Pochi and Tama are looking up at me with “Let’s help him” faces, so I have no choice but to do something.

“Use this medicine.”

“This is?”

“It’s a potion.”

“A potion!”

I don’t understand why he’s so shocked at the mention of potions. This was found at the supposed alchemist’s secret stash house, I can’t guarantee the effectiveness.

Thank Pochi and Tama's kindness if you must, because if it weren't for their begging, I definitely wouldn't have brought out the potion.

The young man carefully swallows the potion, and the result is surprisingly dramatic.

Groaning until just a moment ago, the young man stands up, not even a minute after drinking the potion, and says "I'm healed!" It works as fast as it would in a game. Feels a little disturbing.

"A mid-class potion is a luxury goods that costs three Gold each, no? To give one to a young man you don't even know, hmm, you're a strange one."

The slave trader announces a price slightly higher than market, and the color drains from the face of the young man who had just gotten it back.

I didn't plan on asking for repayment, but I won't say anything here, and let him keep worrying.



The commotion up ahead reaches my ears enhanced by the Clairaudience skill.

The group Zena is following is in the middle of fighting slimes. However, they haven't defeated any, yet find themselves in a hall full of slimes, how careless.

"There's fighting~"

"I can hear the sound of fighting from there *nano desu!*"

Pochi and Tama also seem to have heard it, pointing in that direction to alert me.

I nod in response, and tell the Viscount and others that we would go ahead.

"Someone is fighting up ahead, so we will take care of the front, and the rest of you please watch the rear as you follow."

The Viscount looks like he wants to say something, but I ignore him and run out.

Even if Zena hasn't been hurt, she doesn't have much man's left, so I'm quite worried!

From the doorway of the hall Zena and the others are in, men wearing tunics stumble out.

"Wah! Get away!"

"It burns, I'm burning, ahh, I don't wanna die!"

Slowly being swallowed by a slime, the last man is desperately begging for help, but those around him only back away frightened, none attempting a rescue.

"Pochi, Tama, get out torches from your bags."

"Yea~"

"Yes *nano desu!*"

I light the torches they take out with the magical lighter, and take an already lit one myself.

"Use them to stop the slime's movements, and peel it off that man. Liza, aim for the slime's nucleus to kill it, then leave the rest to them, and catch up to me."

I wait for their reply, then rush into the hall.

It's a little worrisome to leave the beastgirls by themselves, but they have Liza who knows how to defeat slimes, so it should be easy right? They have the torches too.

Tracking the label for Zena on the radar, I wade through the crowd still struggling with the slimes.

There! I see Zena bravely fighting off a slime with her staff, protecting two priestesses, who in turn are protecting the Oracle. Using her staff to

fight might mean she has already run out of mana.

I wanted to snipe the slime's nucleus from afar, but the angle is too awkward. If I make a mistake I'll hit the priestess behind it.

The slime is trying to wrap around Zena's staff, and her along with it.

Zena makes a distressed sound!

Now, I'm up!

I run her way as I take off my jacket, cover the slime wrapped around Zena with it, and pull off the slime through the jacket.

After Zena's brief cry and the sound of cloth ripping, I successfully pull the slime off. While scaring it the torch, I throw a dagger that hasn't gotten a chance to shine, defeating the slime by destroying the nucleus.

"You alright?"

I turn around to confirm her wellbeing—and barely manage to reveal my surprise.

As a result of the slime's rudeness, Zena's blouse has been ripped wide open, and even her tank top has been partly dissolved.

Yeah, in other words, everything that has been hiding Zena's slightest hint of a mature figure are now gone.

Having just escaped from a dire situation, she hasn't noticed though.

It's rude to keep staring, so I take out a clean towel from Storage through my bag, covering up Zena's front.

"Eek! Thanks—Mr. Satou!"

Zena shields her chest with the towel, then finally noticing my presence, she exclaims and wraps her arms around me.

The towel I gave you is falling off, you know?

"Mr. Satou! Thank goodness, you're alright!"

I didn't think we were that close, but since a cute girl is hugging me, I won't complain. I'm glad to be reunited too, after all.

I was going to enjoy the soft sensations while Zena hasn't noticed, but it's hell all around us, so I'll control myself considering the TPO!



The Oracle, who was being protected by Zena, comes over.

Huh? Wait, how come the Parion Temple Oracle is here? Did she get caught up in the dungeon incident on the way back from the westside house call?

“Zena, the reunion celebration can wait. Repelling those monsters is more urgent right now.”

“Ah, so-, sorry. I was lost in the moment.”

“Not at all, I’m happy that you are so glad about seeing me again.”

A priestess picks up the fallen towel as directed by the Oracle.

After admiring the abashed Zena panickingly holding her blouse together and taking the towel, I turn to face the Oracle.

“Judging from your techniques earlier, you know the monster’s weak point correct?”

“Yes, there is a nucleus on the slime, and striking that spot will defeat it.”

“As expected of Mr. Satou, not only nimble as a bird, but also knowledgeable!”

“No, Liza told me about this!”

“A-, a woman’s name?”

Zena draws closer hearing Liza’s name. Well, she was named in this dungeon, so of course Zena doesn’t know.

“Interrogating about affairs can wait. Is there a trick to identifying a slime’s nucleus?”

The Oracle accuses me of having an affair. There’s no evidence, and I’ll get a bad name from this.

Oh well, I’ll clear up that misunderstanding later.

“Yes, the color is different, and if you hold a torch close, it would move its nucleus away out of fear. So once you know about this, it should be easy to

find.”

“Zena, can you use ‘Wind Whisper’?”

“Regrettably, my mana has run dry, so not for a while.”

Since I’m brimming with mana and have no use for it, it would be great if I could give it out. Also, do people recover mana at different speeds? These girls are still out of mana, with no sign of recovery.

Ahh, I’ll think about it later. If I make a large sound, would I get a skill that can help me reach everyone?

I take a deep, deep breath, and yelled at the top of my lungs.

“Aim for the slime’s nucleus!”

>>> Skill obtained: “Sound Broadcasting”

Is it because as a programmer, I rarely have a chance to yell? There’s quite a bit of echo, but I do successfully obtain the skill. After distributing skill points, I yell once more: to aim for the slime’s nucleus, along with an explanation.

It was only a brief explanation, but the soldiers understood it completely, and they start to fight back against the slimes. It could be that they’re well-trained, but maybe the Commanding and Sound Broadcasting skills made it more effective.

There are slimes that were hiding nearby approaching, but they are soon defeated by Liza and the others after catching up.

The soldiers are holding up, but a group of civilians is getting into a bind, so I take Liza and the others to rescue them. Before going, I leave my torch with the priestesses. There are no slimes nearby, but just to be safe.

Pochi and Tama push them back with torches, while Liza attacks with her spear, and in this manner they effortlessly finish the slimes one by one.

My role is reduced to getting the attention of those startled by the appearance of the beastgirls, and calm them down.

Woo! Easy peasy.

As the retaliation against the slimes largely come to an end, I head towards Zena and company.

At some point, Nidoren, Viscount Belton, and the young man entered the hall too. They each find their acquaintances, and celebrate their reunion.

“Master Satou, thank you for your help earlier.”

“Don’t mind it, glad I was on time.”

As I returned to Zena, the priestess standing guard thanks me.

Zena and the Oracle are sitting with their eyes closed.

Are they meditating?

My guess is, that’s a way to recover mana faster right? Compared to before, their mana are clearly recovering.

After admiring the silently meditating Zena and the Oracle from the side, I look around.

Among the fifty soldiers trapped in this dungeon, seven-tenths of them are here. About seven had died, and the remaining five are with another group.

Other than the soldiers, about twenty civilians including the ones who stumbled out of the hall earlier are here.

The other priestess has gathered the wounded near the Oracle, probably to have her use a wide-area healing magic, so we back away a little.

Having recovered some mana, the Oracle begins chanting a long spell.

It’s a chant that lasts several minutes, so the seemingly bored Pochi and Tama make big yawns.

Are they tired?

“...■■■ Area Heal.”

As she completes her spell, a soft glow soon covers the Oracle and the people around her in a cone of light. Where’s the light source? I got curious, so I tried touching the light.

>>> Skill obtained: "Holy Magic: Parion Religion".

Whoa, I got the skill just by touching, feels really simple.

Almost everyone have been healed by the magic.

As the Oracle has exhausted her mana with the Area Heal spell, the priestesses accompanying her are now busy running around using additional recovery magic on those who need it.

Having finished meditating, Zena talks to me while brushing her hair.

"Well, it was great that you're alright."

"Yeah, thanks to the help of these kids!"

In response to Zena rejoicing about my safety, I introduce the beastgirls to her again.

"Ah, so you are the demi-human children from before."

"I'm Pochi *nano desu*"

"I'm Tama~"

"My name is Liza."

Pochi and Tama are being shy, so after making the minimal introductions, they hide behind me.

"For protecting us from stoning back on the surface, Miss has my deep gratitude, because without Miss's magic, these kids and I would not have survived."

Having recalled her protection during the riot, Liza bows to Zena to express her sincere appreciation.

"Thanks~"

"Thankee."

"Heheh, you're welcome."

Were they reminded by Liza's words? The way Pochi and Tama came out from behind me, bowed down, then immediately went back to hiding is so cute.

"Right, Mr. Satou, this path might be connected to the exit."

"Is that so? Did you find out with magic?"

"Yes, I know the spell 'Path of Wind' that can detect the flow of air."

Zena tells me in a hushed voice.

"The thing is, it only detects the flow of air, so I don't know if there is actually a path. We had sent someone to scout ahead, so we'll know soon."

"Alright, hope it's good news."

Soon after the scout had departed, the slimes start dropping from the ceiling, and the rest is history.

While waiting, I look around. The civilians are huddled in the corner to rest.

The Viscount looks like he's telling the captain of the suppression squad captain something. Hope he can put his Flame Magic to use the next time.

After leaving this hall, there is only a long lobby that leads straight to the exist, but there's a problem with that place.

As if designed half-heartedly by a mediocre GM, that chamber is an unavoidable danger zone.

There are thirty Skeleton Soldiers around Level 10 to 15, which should be manageable for the soldiers with the Viscount's magic, but there are three even more troublesome enemies.

The three are a Skeleton Knight, Skeleton Warrior, and Reaper Skeleton, all Level 30.

The Skeleton Reaper with its instant death skill is especially dangerous, so we can't be careless. If we have magic that can purify the dead like in a game this should be simple.

The plan is to wait for the Oracle and fellow priestesses who might be

able to use it to recover their mana.

The scout sent to investigate the lobby returns, and he informs the captain of the same things I had seen from the Map. The captain gathers the squadron's leaders, the Oracle, and the Viscount to discuss a strategy.

Pochi and Tama, having gotten tired of waiting, are nodding off, so I let them nap on my knees, and also have Liza take a rest next to me.

Then, the captain explains his plan, and the battle begins. We have been excluded.

They plan on using the Viscount's magic to weaken the Skeleton Soldiers and Zena's magic to cut them off, then baiting them to this hall to defeat them individually.

They will take advantage of the bottleneck to even the numbers.

The Oracle and the two priestesses stay behind the soldiers and support them with purification magic.

The civilians are placed in a previous chamber, while those who can fight—hunters and merchant's bodyguards protect them from the monsters roaming around.

We were moved to the same chamber to hide with everyone, but now we are leaving.

The reason is the guys talking to the young man from before, they're verbally abusing the beastgirls with slurs against demi-humans.

The slave trader Nidoren and his friends are trying to talk some sense into those guys, but instead of staying in this tense atmosphere, I rather move closer to the battlefield.

Perhaps because they saved his life, that young man himself hasn't been slandering the beastgirls. Well, he seems to be trying to change the topic, but to no avail.

We leave the chamber after thanking Nidoren and his friends, and decide to go stand by near the entrance of the hall that has become a battlefield.

From here, I can clearly see inside.

It just so happens to line up with the Skeleton Room, so I can barely see a fiery red light dancing inside.

“They’re here! Spear team get ready!”

In response to the officer’s order, the soldiers form a line with their spears.

Zena and the Viscount who dealt the first blow with magic run into the hall, and following them, a lightly armored knight comes in, with a horde of Skeleton Soldiers in tow.

Two heavily armored knights from a wall near the pathway, pushing back the Skeleton Soldiers’ advance.

“Spearmen! Don’t stab, swing!”

With the officer’s order, the spears swing down on the Skeleton Soldiers, taking out a chunk of their health.

The priestesses’ Purification Magic come in at this moment, landing the final blows.

I think when the opponent’s health is low, the chance of resistance is decreased.

“Two of the big ones are here! Captain Chigori, go ahead!”

“Yeah! Baza, take on one of them.”

“Leave it to me, captain! I’m pumped!”

The highest-level captain with a broadsword, and the second highest heavily armored warrior with his battle axe raised high, confront the Skeleton Knight and the Skeleton Warrior.

They cut off the two larger Skeletons that broke through the lines, and begin their battle a little far from the frontline.

The Skeleton Knight parries the Captain’s broadsword with its shield,

while the Skeleton Warrior wielding its baton is fiercely exchanging blows with the hot-blooded fierce heavily armored warrior holding his battle axe.

“...■■■ Wind Bind.”

To support the slightly disadvantaged, hot-blooded fierce heavily armored warrior, Zena casts a spell that restricts the Skeleton Warrior's movements.

The Viscount has his arm crossed looking dissatisfied, but doesn't move a finger.

“...■■ Purify!”

Then the Oracle's Purification Magic is released, and the smaller skeletons collapse into piles of bones, but the large skeletons resist it.

Still, this move has successfully frightened them, turning the tide of battle.

“Agh, watch the black one! That guy's scythe can cut through shields!”

Confusion spreads as blood sprays in the front line.

The Reaper Skeleton is as tall as the common skeletons, but its bones are pitch black. Its weapon is like the grim reaper's scythe, with a shape seemingly unsuited for combat, but still cut through a knight's shield, and ripped through his armor like paper.

The knights at the front are at least ten levels lower than the Reaper Skeleton. If nothing is done, the front line will eventually break down.

I take out a small Micro coin from my pocket, fiddling it in hand.

When the Reaper Skeleton steps back from the spear soldiers to swing its scythe, I throw the Micro coin. The target is the Reaper Skeleton's ankle bone. Thanks to the effect of the Sniping and Throwing skills, I accurately hit the miniscule target twenty meters away.

Since I chose to strike the very moment it swings down the scythe, the

Reaper Skeleton falls over just like that, and the soldiers fighting probably thinks that it fell from its own momentum.

The knight and the soldiers see the opportunity, and with repeated swings of the blunt ends of their polearm and spears, successfully destroy the arm holding the scythe.

At the same time, the Oracle's Purification Magic decisively shatters the Reaper Skeleton into broken bones that flies everywhere.

It was a difficult battle, but no one has died, and the Skeletons are defeated.

We enter the Skeleton Room after the other civilians.

This place is several times larger than the previous hall, about the size of two basketball courts.

With bedrock visible everywhere, the ground is a natural rock surface, uneven and difficult to walk on.

The ceiling is hard to see in the dark, but it's about fifteen meters high.

The path to the surface is blocked by a heavy metal door, but it is locked, and no one can open it.

A couple of knights try to destroy it with their baton and polearm, but only cause noise to echo through the place.

Pochi and Tama cover their ears, shrinking back while grimacing.

They make noise for a while, but eventually give up, deciding to rely on magic.

"Could Viscount Belton or Zena's magic break it?"

"My flame can do it easily, but I'll leave the opportunity to shine to the young woman!"

"My-, my magic?"

Not wanting to use his magic, Viscount Belton passes the ball to Zena.

Zena's Air Hammer merely blows around dirt near the door, without doing anything. Since air is very light, Wind Magic can't impart a large force on objects right?

Let's comfort her later!

Next the Viscount casts his flames, but it merely chars the door.

Unlike the frustrated group of people in front of the door, Tama with her own pace pulls on my sleeve and reports.

"Goshujin-sama—that wall is weird."

Looking at where Tama is pointing, I discover an oddity.

I find a trapdoor after checking the Map. This should be the same chute directly above where I had fought the Undead Beast right before the spider's room.

"Nice job finding it!"

I pet Tama's head and scratch her cat ears, and because Pochi looks a little lonely, I pet her with the other hand. Of course, I also scratch her dog ears.

While I did this, the radar reveals the presence of a new enemy.

But, the soldiers and merchants investigating where the enemy is aren't screaming out of fear, but delight.

What's going on? I look that way in surprise, and try to find out the enemy's true form on the map.

"Hey, there's a treasure chest!"

"Ooh! I've heard people say that treasure chests sometimes appear in dungeons."

"It's me, I found it!"

The leisurely chatter quickly turns to sounds of fright.

« Hohohohoho, what a welcome party, me grateful! »

What appears is the Eyeball Demon that dragged us into this dungeon. I thought he wasn't here, but he probably used some skill to hide himself!

“Everyone get in position, don’t make a circular formation, but a triangular one! That thing can use magic! Viscount Belton and Zena, cast defensive magic on the vanguard!”

The captain immediately directs the squadron into formation, while Zena casts Wind Defence and Air Wall. Did the Oracle and company run out of mana? They quickly retreat to a corner.

“Finally here? You demon! Unfortunately Fire Magic has no protective spells. I’m going to cast Flame Pillar, buy some time!”

Oh, I thought he just didn’t want to use his magic, but was he saving his strength for fighting the demon? I apologize in my mind, with my impression of him improved.

With a bellow, the eyeball demon is surrounded by black spheres. Those spheres circle around the demon, repelling the knights who attack.

« Human magic is slow, me bored. »

It blinks its enormous eye.

Huh? What was that? There was a strange feeling.

>>> Skill obtained: “Demon Eye Resistance”.

My sight moves to the log, and such a record appears. Looking around, those facing the eyes have become **Charmed**.

The beastgirls also could not resist it, and they are also charmed.

“Goshujin-sama! Not good *nano desu*! So much meat *nano desu*”

“Meat, eat it whole~?”

“Pochi, Tama! For Goshujin-sama, hunt as many as you can!”

They must be hallucinating the soldiers as barbecued chicken and beef I think?

I feel bad doing this while they look so happy, but I quickly knock them out, and bring them to a corner of the room to hide. This place is behind solid rock, so it should be safe even if the demon casts anything dangerous.

Charmed soldiers start attacking the others. Since they are by far the minority, it doesn't develop into disastrous infighting.

Now, the only people fighting the eyeball demon in close quarters are the captain and the hot-blooded heavily armored warrior, but their respective broadsword and battle axe are blocked by the black spheres without touching the demon at all.

Zena is casting support magic some distance away, but she doesn't have much mana left.

« Foolish mortals, fight amongst yourselves! Me pleased. »

Perhaps the commotion appears amusing to it, the eyeball demon ridicules them. The ridicule leads to another below, and the eyeball demon starts glowing crimson.

Then, Viscount Belton's spell is finally complete, and the ground near the eyeball demon starts burning.

"Demon! Don't think Humans will stay beneath you forever!"

He hold out his staff saying a clichéd line, but as if in mockery, the eyeball demon flies away from the flame like nothing happened. The AR pops up with the message "Fire Magic Damage Reduced 75%", so did it just use defensive magic?

Just as that thing implied before, even if the Viscount had already begun chanting, it can still cancel it in time, how cunning.

« Hot! Hot! It's nice and hot! Me in summer all year 'round. »

"Bu-, but how? Mid Rank Magic had no effect!"

« Effect? It's effective, human. Me kind. »

Indeed the eyeball demon's health is decreasing, if only a little.

« Ahh, despair hits the spot! Me too satisfied. »

If this keeps going, casualties are inevitable.

Zena did say a Low Rank Demon is as strong as a wyvern, and this thing does feel quite strong.

So even if I reveal myself, it's time to fight.

Even if I might be banished for showing unreasonable strength, I can't leave Zena to her demise here.

But screams come from people hiding in the next chamber, brushing away my determination.

Looking toward the path, I see Nidoren and others suddenly appear with the bloodied Undead Beast behind them.

Shit! I was too focused on the scene in front of me and neglected the Radar.

Feeling dejected, I pick up a rock, and throw it at the Undead Beast.

I didn't finish it in one hit, because I want to take advantage of its presence.

Staring at me with empty eye sockets and ignoring the middle aged man attacking it, that thing runs in my direction.

I catch Zena's shocked face with the corner of my eye.

"Mr. Satou!"

I stop the Undead Beast's charge with my arms, and let him slam into the wall hiding the chute.

The wall collapses, and both the Undead Beast and I are swallowed by darkness.

"Zena! Stay in position!"

"No, let me go! Mr. Satou is, Mr. Satou is—!"

With Zena calling my name behind me, I sink into the abyss.

Sorry, Zena. You can scold me later.

I'm in the chute behind the trap door. It's too troublesome to return to the battlefield after falling three hundred meters, so I swing myself into a small chamber fifteen meters down.

Normally this is a stunt that would never succeed and only break arms, but I easily accomplish it with my high level body.

I take out the rarely used Sacred Sword and cut down the Unread Beast that tumbled in with me.

There is of course no blue glow, but in a display of amazing sharpness, it splits the Undead Beast in two. Whenever I use the Sacred sword, I would be hurt a little, so I sheath it again.

Let's transform in here!

I change my robe for a flashy outfit, and add a vividly colored jacket on top. This jacket has a hood, which might hide my face, but I won't count on it.

I search the Storage, and found something perfect.

It's the Dragon Mask I bought shopping with Martha. Since this silver mask was popular last year, it wouldn't identify me right?

I also put on the blond wig I bought.

Alright, now I'm prepared.

I run out the path, toward the battlefield like the wind.

In the hall before the Skeleton Room, some monsters that might have been summoned by the demon are approaching, while the hunters and guards are desperately keeping them at bay.

Making sure no one had gone out into the pathway, I throw a boulder I had in Storage.

Overwhelming mass spares no monster.

>>> Title obtained: "Ruthless One".

Making sure I got every monster on the Radar, I dash between the dumbfounded hunters and guards, and go to the Skeleton Room.

In the Skeleton Room, the battle against the demon continues.

In the few minutes that passed, several soldiers have been seriously injured, but Zena is safe and sound. The beastgirls I hid in the corner are still passed out, but otherwise fine.

Probably due to the viscount's magic, fire is raging all around the demon, without any space for combat. Therefore, I take out a rock from Storage and aim for the center of the giant eye.

« Whoa? What was that? Me surprised. »

"Knights, leave the demon to me!"

"You're kidding me! We don't need help from some creepy silver mask!"

Oh my, I was rejected?

The silver festival mask meant to hide my identity, made me look suspicious.

The eyeball demon bellows, then a translucent black wall appears in front of it.

I try to hit it with a rock, but it loses momentum in front of the black wall, falling short. A magic that defends against projectiles, I assume.

« What are you? Hurting demons with only a rock, me confused. »

He bellows again, and a black javelin appears.

Do demons chant spells with that bellowing?

I easily evade the black javelin flying at me. Though it moved with alarming speed, my Evasion skill gave me the exact timing, allowing me to do so successfully.

Did I distract its attention? The viscount's magic "Flame Javelin" and the Oracle's magic "Sacred Javelin" pierces the demon's head, taking out a large chunk of the demon's health.

Then, on the other side, the captain's broadsword and the hot-blooded

heavily armored warrior's axe deliver heavy blows.

The axe doesn't do any damage, but the captain's broadsword is a magic weapon, and cuts down the demon's health.

« Agh, defeated by humans? Defeated! Me spiteful. »

A magic formation appears at the eyeball demon's feet.

"It's going to cast something, everyone take cover!"

At the captain's warning, the soldiers hide behind nearby rocks.

In a game, this would be the chance to attack with the intention to face it head on, but in reality damage control is more important. Trying to launch a full-on assault on the demon right now, it's akin to trying to snuff out the fuse of dynamite that's about to blow.

Even then, I feel like I need to take the chance to deal a deadly blow, so I take out the Sacred Sword tied on my belt and rush in. But, something lands on top of me and stopped my advance, pinning me to the ground.

>>> Skill obtained: "Dark Magic: Demon".

>>> Skill obtained: "Dark Magic Resistance".

Damn! Was it the black sphere that stopped the soldiers' attacks before?

Gaining the skill is good, but nevermind that, this magic formation looks like bad news. I dropped the Sacred Sword when I fell, so I am blown away by the black sphere with empty hands.

With the demon at the center, the black magic formation extends towards the sky—

« Ahh, my master! Me yearning. »

—And a pitch black giant emerges from the formation.



That really is a creature I can only call a demon.

Horns of a goat, eyes shining crimson-black, skin with a pitch-black luster. On two pairs of arms there are sharp silvery claws. Bat wings with glowing red veins sprout from his back, as well as split tails with sharp needles on the end. The seven-meter-tall ginormous torso is floating in mid air.

This guy is a Level 62 High Rank Demon, with Wind, Lightning, and Dark Magic skills in addition to combat skills. It also has five skills inherent to its species: “Flying”, “Petrifying Breath”, “Poison”, “Regeneration”, “Brethren Creation”.

“Impossible! It summoned a Mid Rank Demon!”

« Wrong, mortals, I’m displeased. » ¹²

« Master is a Demon King’s right hand! A god-like lord of demons! Me refuting.»

“Unbelievable. A High Rank Demon?”

Awestruck by the appearance of a new demon, the Viscount and the captain fall to the ground with despair after hearing that it’s a High Rank Demon. The only ones who held on are the heavily armored warrior and the Oracle.

« Establishing the dungeon and summoning me was excellent work, I’m rewarding. »

The High Rank Demon grabs the eyeball demon—

« Ahh, to become part of master again! Me ecstatic. »

—and bites down like that, devouring it.

As the sudden travesty comes to an end, that guy grows another face with only an eyeball.

Is it a fusion? At least it didn’t evolve or gain levels, so it’s not all bad.

« Weaklings, fear me! Strong ones, fight me! I'm filtering. »

I hear that thing's voice overlapped with a bellowing. The new face seems to be chanting a spell.

A storm surpassing the worst typhoon rages in this hall, and the soldiers are blown against the walls.

I run against the wind, and before Zena and the priestesses hit the wall, I catch them one by one.

The men can fend for themselves. Can't save everyone, after all.

>>> Skill obtained: "Wind Magic: Demon".

>>> Skill obtained: "Wind Magic Resistance".

When I endured the High Rank Demon's magic, I obtained two skills, and I add skill points to the resistance skill.

I remove the Sacred Sword from the rock it is stuck on, and confront the High Rank Demon.

That thing looks down on me with a smirk, then after noticing the Sacred Sword in my hand, his expression of ridicule changes.

« To think there is a Hero here. Were you notified by some god? I'm furious. »

While talking to me, that thing is also quietly casting magic. What a dirty trick.

That thing's body is surrounded by a thin black fog, probably some type of support magic.

Well, playing dirty is my strong point too. Checking the AR display for the effect of the spell, I find out it is some sort of buff, with a ridiculous "Physical Damage Reduced 90%" effect.

« Carelessness will bring you death! I'm serious. »

The High Rank Demon bellows once more, and his claws, horns, and tail are covered by black fog this time, which the AR display reveals to be “Physical Attack Increased 300%”.

Oi, stop buffing yourself.

It will only get worse if I just watch, so I start my offense.

I can only reach that guy’s feet with a sword, so I strike with the magic gun at max setting instead.

It should be a nigh invisible bullet, but that guy twists to evade, and rushes me with a speed unfit for that huge form.

That thing swings down its right claw, which leaves a red glowing trail. I lean back as far as I can, dodging the ripping attack, then use my impossibly unreasonable strength to slash upwards.

However, this merely scratches that thing’s skin, leaving a shallow wound. I thought I was used to fighting from facing monsters, but it seems like I’m not quite prepared.

« What is it Hero? Can’t use a Sacred Sword? I’m disappointed. »

Whatever minor injuries I had received, they were healed in an instant.

Is it as the Oracle said, that without the title of “Hero”, I can’t uncover the full potential of a Sacred Sword ?

I dodge that guy’s attack while retaliating, but the bullets from my magical gun are evaded, and the Sacred Sword only leaves a shallow wound, so I’m unable to injure it at all.

Perhaps unable to take anymore, that thing begins to throw lightning, mixed into close combat.

I am struck by lightning without any chance to dodge.

>>> Skill obtained: “Lightning Magic: Demon Tribe”.

>>> Skill obtained: “Lightning Resistance”.

>>> Skill obtained: “Paralysis Resistance”.

“Ouch, my limbs feel prickly.”

If I had to describe the sensation, it would feel like the numbness after sitting *seiza*¹³ plus the shock from static electricity. I verify my health bar, and see about five points of damage.

I try to avoid that thing's claw attack, but because the paralysis is still there, my backstep was a moment too slow. I parried with the Sacred Sword, but the claw still scratches my shoulder.

>>> Skill obtained: "Poison Resistance".

>>> Skill obtained: "Disease Resistance".

>>> Skill obtained: "Decay Resistance".

How many kinds of status afflictions are there? Well, did I successfully resist it? There's nothing wrong with my body.

I put some distance between us, while adding points to the resistance skills.

« Tough fellow! I'm awed. »

Unfortunately, since I had easily resisted all magic and status afflictions, I start to get careless.

That thing breathes out a grayish gas, covering my left side.

The surface of my body begins to petrify, and I take out a cape to protect against further damage from the petrifying gas.

>>> Skill obtained: "Petrification Resistance."

I am quite worried, but only my clothing and the surface of my body turn out to be petrified. I open and close my palm a few times, and the thin layer of cast-like petrification falls off, showing flawless skin underneath.

That was scary, good thing there's a level gap.

That thing is really surprised that the petrification didn't work on me, but still keeps firing Dark Bullets and Wind Cutters at me, then swings his class at me as I try to escape into the air.

Damn, jumping into the air is a faux pas in a fighting game.

My robe, brittle from petrification, rips apart, exposing my shoulder.

I do take the damage, but the skill Self Healing cures me every time I am injured. Thanks to that, though my robe is all bloody, I am otherwise healthy.

Even so, it might not be safe to lose too much blood, so I should not rely on Self Healing overmuch.

When the thoughtlessly extended arm tries to grab me, I take the opportunity to blow it away with the Sacred Sword.

Huh? Isn't physical damage reduced 90%?

Well, that thing quickly regrows the lost arm. The severed arm contorts like clay, and transforms into a Low Rank Demon.

« Quite a sharp Sacred Sword, but my brethren will increase if you cut me, you know? I'm advising. »

The arm demon attacks the captain and others, but since it doesn't have any magical skills, they should be able to fight it. To make things a little easier, I snuff its legs with the magic gun.

« However good you are as a swordsman, without the power of a Sacred Sword, you cannot defeat me. I'm derisive. »

It's what the Oracle mentioned, "Only the Sacred Sword wielded by a Hero can defeat a Demon King." Seriously, High Rank Demons follow the same rule as Demon Kings?

And, I only have two kinds of magic.

Zena said Low Rank Magic has no effect, so Fireball won't do right?

Meteor Shower is too powerful, so it's out of the question. It might defeat that thing, but it would put Zena and the beastgirls in danger. The people of Seiryuu City and myself wouldn't be able to escape unscathed either.

Distracted by such thoughts, while I am dodging the High Rank Demon's class, I am instead struck to the ground by its tail, slamming me into the

corner.

Shaking my head nauseous from impact, I stand up.

If this continues, it will only get worse.

The Sacred Sword can cut it, but it regenerates quickly, and enemies will only increase.

I only have magic that's either too strong or too weak.

The magic gun will only be dodged.

Hmm? Would it?

« I'm assaulting. »

Then, the High Rank Demon does a flying kick.

I am struck with that multiple-ton inertia, and I fly across the ground, slamming into the wall of the dungeon.

Ouch. If I didn't have Pain Resistance, I could have passed out from the pain.

"...■■■ Air Hammer."

"...■■■■ Flame Javelin."

"...■■ Sacred Javelin."

Suddenly, Zena, the Viscount, and the Oracle cast their magic at the High Rank Demon.

The demon resists the magic, receiving not the tiniest scratch, but it is enough of an opening for me. I had dropped both the Sacred Sword and the magic gun, but there is a back up magic gun in Storage.

« You dare interrupt my pleasure with weak magic! I'm outraged. »

With its foot on my stomach, that thing picks up a nearby boulder to launch at Zena and company.

I won't let you do that, okay?

I bring out the back up magic gun from Storage, and fire at point blank range. The setting is at maximum, of course.

« Grr, I'm careless. »

The first shot connects, but that guy quickly gives up on the boulder, so all subsequent shots are evaded. I hate how the magic gun has a tenth-of-a-second delay after pulling the trigger.

However, the damage caused is not even one percent of that guy's health. Yet since the damage caused by the gun regenerate slower compared to sword cuts, if my shots could continue to hit, I might be able to do this.

Let's use Fireball to distract him, then attack with the magic gun from up close! I recover mana very quickly, so as long as I'm not using Meteor Shower, I don't have to worry about exhausting it.

To increase the power as much as I can, I put away the Sacred Sword I just recovered, and take out a staff. The Viscount and Zena both use staffs, so they must increase the power somewhat.

« Abandoning the unusable Sacred Sword? I'm curious. »

That thing gets away from me, and preparing to dodge in any direction, it arches its back.

I choose Fireball from the Magic tab.

Eat this!

BOOM!

My field of view becomes white, and a thundering boom echoes.

When my sight returns, I see the half-charred, smoking High Rank Demon, and the dungeon wall behind him with a half-spherical crater burned into it. The wall is still red-hot and melting like magma.

What happened?

—Right, I forgot.

When I used Meteor Shower, casting it from the Magic tab was several magnitudes stronger than selecting the icon. Then, other spells are probably the same.

The pressure from the hot air blows, and I would burn myself if I breathe that, so I hold my breath.

« Unexpectedly, someone with such good combat skills is a magician! I'm incredulous. »

The viscount says something like "That must be the High Rank Spell Crimson Spear!" from behind the rock.

Nope, it was a super-basic Fireball.

But, powerful as it may be, it is difficult to use. Though I can win after three more shots, that guy has seen through me, and to prevent me from attacking, is preparing to hide behind Zena and the others.

Sorry, Wagahai guy.

Checkmate!

I put away the staff, and take up the sacred sword again.

Yes, when I recalled the thing about magic, I also remembered something else.

I dash across the room, closing in on that thing by bouncing off boulders.

—To defeat a Demon King, you need a Hero wielding a Sacred Sword.

I take out a tent from Storage to defend against the petrifying gas that guy desperately releases, and slide between that guy's legs.

—High Rank Demons are a Demon King's right hand, a **god-like** lord of demons.

The petrified tent did its thing.

I throw a Fireball at the ceiling from the back, to attract everyone's attention.

—However, I have a Sacred Sword yet no Hero title.

Relying on the Radar, I jump from the ground, and kick the still burning-hot ceiling to change directions. It felt a little warm.

—So I can't damage one effectively.

From a wall jump, I shoot toward that guy from a blind spot and cut down its wings, preventing it from flying.

—Is that really true?

Let's finish this before it regenerates.

—Remember your titles. What are you?

I change my title and sword, then from above the High Rank Demon who is standing still for a single moment to regenerate its wings, I swing straight down.

The **pitch-black** blade that is absorbing all light, splits the dark demon apart. The edge of the cut begins turning to dust, and the High Rank Demon slowly breaks down.



« What, that sword! ...I'm...de-...-feated. »

After the demon says that, the black dust vanishes like fog clearing up.

It felt like cutting down an illusion, and everything worked so smoothly I feel uneasy, but according to the log it really was defeated.

As the people around me stare dumbfounded, I sheath the sword and leave here.

How I was able to defeat that guy, seems unbelievably simple now.

If with the title of a Hero and a sacred sword, one could defeat something **god-like**, then a **God Slayer** with a Divine Sword who can kill a **god**, can definitely do it too.

Yup, that was it.

Getting back to the small chamber before, I change back and climb up the chute. The wall of this dungeon is harder than normal rock, so it took some time to dig holes I can use to climb up.

“Goshujin-sama—”

When I'm five meters from the exit, Tama descends wearing a rope harness. Was it to rescue me? Liza and Pochi are peeking down the hole.

“Thanks for coming after me, you've worked hard.”

“Yea!”

I let Tama sit on my shoulder, and climb up this way.

“Thank you too, Pochi and Liza.”

“As long as you're...”

“Alright *nano desu!*”

Since Liza seems to be overjoyed and crying, I take out a new handkerchief from my bag for her. And were the tears contagious? Pochi and Tama are crying too, hugging me tightly.

There, there. If it's tears of happiness from seeing me safe, you can cry all

you want.

I wave to Zena who is running my way. It hasn't been two days since we were trapped inside, but I feel like I spent an eternity in this dungeon.

At some point, my titles have increased.

>>> Obtained title: "Dungeon Conqueror".

>>> Obtained title: "Dances with Demons".

>>> Obtained title: "Demon Slayer (High Rank)".

>>> Obtained title: "Hero".

I wish I had the last title earlier!



Chapter 6: To the Surface

「Satou Here,

Due to chance and human error, I once had an opportunity to stay at the Presidential Suite of a high class hotel. Being only an average citizen, I felt so tense, I could not enjoy the experience to its fullest. “Too much of a good thing can be bad”, as I often say.」

Holding both Pochi and Tama’s hands, I ascend the spiral staircase leading to the exit. We are the last among the civilians. Along with several of his subordinates, the hot-blooded heavily armored warrior is staying at the hall below to keep guard.

They might check our luggage when we exit, so when no one is looking, I swapped the Bag of Holding with the regular bag. The cores Pochi is holding has also been reduced by seventy percent, with the excess moved to Storage through the Bag of Holding.

The amount is much more than what anyone else had defeated, so I made the adjustment to prevent potential hassle.

“How about getting some good food to eat after we get out? Do any of you have something in mind?”

“Meat?!”

“Meat is good! I’ve seen huge pieces of meat on wagons *nano desu!*”

These kids sure do like meat!

I thought it was because they’re beastpeople, but if you think about it, all children tend to like meat!

However, the “huge pieces of meat” Pochi mentioned is the wyvern right?

If possible, I would like to divert her attention to other types of meat, rather than wyvern.

“Pochi, Tama, meat is certainly good. But for mere slaves to ask for meat, it’s unbefitting of our position.”

“Unbefitting~?”

“Liza is using difficult words *nano desu*.”

“I mean it’s too luxurious for us.”

Though Liza is trying to dissuade the two, I don’t think meat from the open-air stalls or something is that expensive.

The pork chop I had cost only a few Large Copper coins too.

“To celebrate getting out of the dungeon alive, why not have some meat dishes?”

“Yay~” “*Nano desu!*”

“Goshujin-sama, as you wish. I, Liza, will enjoy every last speck of meat for your sake!”

Still holding my hands, Pochi and Tama are jumping around in joy.

And when I turn around to look at Liza who is following behind, I see her holding up her hand in a fist with a solemn expression, as if making a vow.

No, you don’t have to be that serious about it.

The sunlight shining in from the exit is quite blinding.

I am led outside the dungeon by Pochi and Tama, as they hop into the light.

Upon exiting, what awaits us are the uneasy and disturbed faces of those had gone ahead.

By looking around, the cause should be somewhat obvious.

Around the exit is an empty lot the size of a running track. The lot is empty but it’s not exactly flat, as a trench runs across its surface in an outward spiral from the exit. I assume that it is the remnant of the plaza and

nearby houses being sucked into the dungeon during its creation.

In addition, the exit is now surrounded by a military encampment, protected by barricades backed by sandbags. Between the gaps of the barricades, I can see a row of cannons the same as what I saw on the anti-dragon towers. Behind those cannons are soldiers equipped with large crossbows on standby.

Of course, the cannons are aimed at the entrance of the dungeon—where we are right now.

Not just Pochi and Tama, even Liza is looking uneasy, so I ask someone who seems to know what's going on.

“We were ordered to stay here before they finish checking whether any of us is a monster in disguise or has caught a contagious disease from monsters.”

Oh, I see, inspection does seem necessary.

As far as I can tell, none of us are monsters, nor is anyone sick or poisoned. Well, I don't plan on announcing that, because even if I do, no one will believe me.

Surveying the soldiers in the encampment, I don't see anyone with a skill like Appraisal, so we can only wait for people or equipment that can do so to arrive.

Thanks to the Oracle and other clergy among the survivors, we don't need to worry about anyone being severely wounded. Those with small wounds are left alone, but anyone with broken bones or deep cuts have been treated, and is now resting on capes laid on the ground.

Oh yeah, there are still three bottles of potions and another jar of ointment. Let's put them to use! As for gifts for Martha's family, I'll just buy more next time.

I thought people might not trust medicine given by a stranger, so I ask Zena to administer them to the wounded in my stead.

Perhaps having become tired of waiting, Tama is leisurely napping face-

up on my lap, while Pochi has gotten on top of my shoulders.

They were quite agitated by the atmosphere of disturbance and uneasiness, so I have been trying to comfort them, letting them lean on me to sleep. Liza has been holding her spear like she was standing guard, so I made her take a rest by me.

After an hour, several carriages arrive, and inspection begins. They are letting people out the barricade one by one, and having them touch the Yamato Stone I had seen before.

After the captain and the Oracle, Zena is called as she is an arcane soldier. Inspecting the squadron comes first, and we are last.

“Then I will go out first, and wait for you there.”

“Yea~”

“Yes *nano desu.*”

“Understood.”

I assure the anxious-looking girls before heading to the other side of the barricade. I leave my luggage to the lady official, and walk towards the table with the Yamato Stone.

Damn, it would be too strange if I survived the Dungeon still at Level 1 and without any skills, right?

I quickly operate the Social tab in the Menu. Since the beastgirls are Level 13, I'll make myself slightly lower at Level 10. As for skills, I'll put down “Haggling” and “Market Price” which seem suitable for a merchant. Wouldn't it be unnatural not to have any skills for combat? Let's add “Throwing” and “Evasion” too!

Ushered by one of the staff, I place my hands on the Yamato Stone. My eyes nearly dart toward the valley of the female official sitting across the Stone, but I manage to hold back.

I read what's displayed by the Yamato Stone, confirming that the statuses I set are showing up.

“Amazing, you’re not a soldier or an explorer, yet you have risen to such a level at this age. You must have it hard.”

“It wasn’t much.”

Standing guard by the Yamato Stone, a female knight with a lot of makeup exclaims, but I reply with Japanese modesty.

“—So, please give me the spear.”

“My master made it for me, so this spear is as important as my life. Not even for a moment, I will never let it go.”

“Like I said, it doesn’t matter how you feel!”

I hear a quarrel behind me, and turning around, I see Liza making a fuss about giving up the spear.

“Liza, they will surely return it later, so please give it to that person for now.”

“I-, if you say so, *goshujin-sama*...”

Persuaded for now, Liza reluctantly hands the spear over to the staff lady.

Let’s write down her name and department in the notepad of the Social tab! It would be great to get it back quickly, but from what I see on the Map, everyone before us has been sent to the citadel on carriage.

I don’t think they would lock us up in jail, or dispose of us to prevent rumors. But something like detaining us before they have the situation under control is very possible.

If you think about it, a dungeon appeared inside the city, and a High Rank Demon showed up, so it was definitely an astonishing incident.

I hear a small gasp behind me.

Seems like it made in surprise that despite being a slave, Liza is Level 13 and has an upward of four skills.

I can’t see Liza’s expression, but her tail is swaying around, so she is probably quite content.

Pochi and Tama give the bag of cores to the lady, and run over. Maybe since they are children, they were let in together.

Since they can't reach the Yamato Stone, Liza picks them up from behind, and they're wiggling around, seemingly enjoying it.

The official asks Pochi to place her hands on the Yamato Stone, then gasps louder than she did for Liza. It's probably extraordinary to be Level 13 at ten years old, and with four skills too.

Pochi wags her tail rapidly, and scrunches her nose looking my way, clearly proud of herself.

Last but not least is Tama, who is held up by Liza like Pochi. She seems to be trying to swing her limbs, but ran out of strength from the excitement, and is moving like a corpse.

The gasp in response to Tama's status is smaller compared to the one for Pochi. Though she is just as amazing as Pochi, it's the third time after all, doesn't it make sense for the surprise to die down? Tama looks a little miffed.

"It wasn't easy to train demi-human slaves like this, was it?"

"Not at all, since they are quite capable."

Not easy, true, but capable, also true. Without them, I probably wouldn't have died, but definitely would have run into traps or other misfortunes.

The four of us are escorted by soldiers to the carriage, where there are several people who had gone through inspection before us waiting. Inside the covered wagon, armed soldiers are sitting at the front and back.

There aren't anyone I know on this wagon, so I keep my mouth shut.

Since there might be people who dislike beastpeople, I make sure Pochi and Tama don't get too excited. Causing uneasiness could make people belligerent.

Then, under this tense atmosphere, the carriage arrives at the county citadel. Regrettably, the openings on the wagon are covered by cloth, so we

can't see outside, unable to enjoy the view.

After exiting the carriage, we are once again surrounded by soldiers.

"Wh-, where are you taking us?"

"Yeah! We had just survived the dungeon!"

The delinquent-looking young man and the obstinate uncle are protesting against the soldiers. Despite being surrounded by an armed group of people, they sure are courageous.

"For the next few days you will stay in jail. This is the decision made by our lord Count. Those who disobey will be charged with treason. To make it easier on everyone, shut up and abide!"

Whoa! I was wondering whether we would be detained, but seems like I underestimated the nobility. It has become a jail experience.

After all that effort saving Seiryuu City from the clutches of a High Rank Demon, my reward is "an all-expense-paid trip to jail". What a bummer. But I did hide my identity, so I can't really complain.

Did talk of treason have an effect? Without further resistance, everyone is now obediently following the soldiers. Not until later do I learn that, when facing treason, one's family would also be implicated, not just themselves.

The jail is somewhat dim and cold. There isn't even a mattress, so we are forced to sleep on the stone floor. We are only given a thin blanket, so it's going to be a long night. What's more, a pot out in the open serves as the toilet. It's real harsh.

Really wish they would respect privacy a bit more.

Though this place looks so miserable, in the end, the four of us won't stay in here for even one night.

"Hey, which one of you's Satou?"

"That's me."

"Follow me, you're going somewhere else."

A male official juttingly unfit to be here at the jail comes to fetch me.

Man, leaving the beastgirls by themselves in a place like this, I wouldn't dream of it. Let's put my Negotiation skill to work here.

"These kids are my slaves, so if I'm to be moved, please let these kids come with me."

"Uh, my orders only state to bring you. The demi-human slaves are not part of this."

This is where I introduce some golden incentives right?

A Gold coin would be too much, so I quietly pass a Silver coin to the official here for me, while saying: "Couldn't you do me a favor?"

>>> Obtained skill: "Bribery".

>>> Obtained skill: "Persuasion".

The silvery incentive seems to have quite the effect, as the man's attitude quickly softens.

"...That's what I was told, but I wasn't ordered not to bring your slaves either. Well, you could take them with you, but if they're kicked out, it's not my business!"

"Alright, that's fine."

If that happens, I'll just persuade the person who tries to do that!

Since they look useful, I add points to the new skills. If I abuse these, I might raise the flag for becoming a sinister merchant.

Waiting for us where we are brought, there is an old gentleman I have never met.

"Nice to meet you, Master Satou. I am Deschamps, the chief butler at the House of Viscount Belton."

Yeah—not Sebastian¹.

“Nice to meet you, Mister Deschamps.”

“Master Satou, please do just call me Deschamps.”

Calling a stylish old gentleman like this directly by name, it’s too much for me.

“For delaying your proper treatment, I sincerely apologize. To have let Master Viscount’s savior stay even a moment in jail, it was the result of my incompetence.”

“No, it’s thanks to you that I don’t have to stay a night in jail. Besides, it’s not every day that I get to see the inside of one.”

While constantly apologizing, Deschamps brings us to a guest house inside the citadel. The size of this citadel sure is large, nearly the same size as the university I attended.

“Please stay in the room here. There should be maids on duty now.”

When Deschamps rings the bell placed on a table near the entrance, a twenty-something maid comes out from a room down the hallway. Though she is a maid, she is not an Akiba-style or Victorian Era maid. She isn’t wearing a so-called maid outfit, but a normal dress like an ordinary female housestaff.

Is it because aproned dresses and white lace haven’t been introduced here? Rather than miso or soy sauce, I think introducing those things is the true responsibility of a Japanese person. Uh, isn’t it? Well, that’s a shame.

“I shall take my leave here. If you have any requests please feel free to ask the attending maid. And these might not be much, but they are a token of gratitude from my master.”

Receiving a small bag from Deschamps, I see that it is not filled with money but small, pebble-like objects. Jewels, maybe?

It would be funny if it’s actually filled with candy.

Rejecting it would be rude, so I simply ask him to pass on a message of thanks to the Viscount.

Normally I should thank him in person, but since he let his chief butler deliver the gift, he must be too busy to come see me.

Speaking of which, Viscount is a rank below Count, so his position must be quite high.

However, if I recall, having other nobility live in a noble's territory is uncommon.

Even if the titles are similar, I probably shouldn't carelessly assume that this place has exactly the same nobility system as Medieval Europe.

Leaving the rest to the maid, Deschamps leaves.

"Then, allow me to show you to your room."

"Alright, please."

I follow the maid, listening to her explanations.

Pochi and Tama were sternly ordered by Liza to stay quiet, so Liza is carrying them under her arms like giant stuffed dolls. The way they're covering their mouths with their overlapping hands, fingers outstretched, is quite cute.

The chief butler and the maid both casually referred to it as a room, but even the entrance lobby is eight *jou*, and the entire house is about 200 *tsubo*². If this were a hotel's presidential suite, several of my paychecks would be gone just to stay a single night here.

The living room isn't lined with carpet but something like felt, and has several leather sofas that appears to be quite soft. The sofas are decorated with cloth pillows, and I feel like I can relax on it.

This room is about 30 *jou*³, and there is a fireplace without ventilation on the other end of this room.

Did I look quite curious about it? The maid explains to me.

“That uses a heating magic tool. Pressing the lever here will turn on the mana, and the magic tool inside the heater will become hot. If you wish to adjust the temperature, don’t hesitate to ring the bell and I will come immediately.”

Whoa! Fascinating!

The chandelier on the ceiling doesn’t have any candles either, so that’s a magic tool too. The AR display calls it a “Shimmering Chandelier”, which makes me anticipate nighttime.

Next, we are brought to a twenty-*jou*⁴ conference room.

Similar to the living room, the decor here is of high quality. Perhaps due to the more simple layout, this room feels more reserved.

The dining room is right next to it, where there is a wide table able to seat dozens, made of a dark granite smooth to the touch.

The maid only briefly mentions that the changing room, the maids’ waiting room, and the serving pantry are also nearby.

After ascending the stairs back at the entrance, we see a master bedroom that is as spacious as the lobby. An oversized bed with a canopy is sitting grandiosely at the center, looking quite comfy.

Pochi and Tama look like they want to tackle it, but Liza holds them tight, so the maid doesn’t get mad. Good job, Liza!

Connected to this room, there is a small area for staff and guards. There is only a stiff bed and a simple wooden chair, so it is quite plain. The class gap sure is extreme.

There are toilets on both floors, but they are squatting types like the one at Gateside Inn. What serves as toilet paper is not a pile of hay but papyrus, feels high class.

No baths unfortunately.

“Is something the matter?”

“Uh, it’s just that there doesn’t seem to be a bath.”

I say with the speck of hope that there might be one.

“Would you like to take a bath? In that case, I will let the male servants bring over the tub, and it should be ready in the evening.”

They’ll carry the tub! Amazing servants.

“Sorry, the request seems to be quite troublesome.”

“Not at all. If you have any wishes, we will do our best to serve you.”

I don’t have any special requests, but I hear a cute grumbling from behind me. Don’t know whether it’s Pochi or Tama, but it’s about lunchtime after all.

“Then, I will prepare lunch. If you have anything you dislike, we can accommodate that.”

“No, I don’t have any preference, so it’s fine.”

After making a bow, the maid exits the room.

Having been carried by Liza the entire time, Pochi and Tama are now fast asleep. If that’s the case, did the grumbling then come from Liza? Liza’s cheeks are slightly flushed, but I will pretend not to notice.

Seeing the dishes set on the table, I tilt my head in confusion.

Seven plates of various sizes are lined up on the table. Maybe to prevent cooling, they are covered by round silver lids, but why is there only one portion? Is it due to a difference in treatment?

“Um, what about the kids’ portion?”

“Your servants’ portions have been prepared in another room.”

“Can you bring it to this room? Eating together is my house rule.”

Of course, this is just an excuse, but I really don’t like eating all alone.

Fast food is a different story, but if it’s a free meal, I like eating together with everyone.

In the tray in front of the beastgirls, there are only bowls of stew and rye bread. I ask for dishes from the maid, and share my food with everyone.

“Yeah, as expected of food in the citadel, tastes great.”

“Tasty tasty~”

“The meat in the stew is so big, so delicious!”

“Really, the chewy texture is unbelievable.”

Huh~my dishes don’t have that kind of meat though? That darker meat is different from the stuff in my food.

Checking the AR display, I see that there is lamb in my plate, while everyone else got wyvern. The kind Pochi talked about when we escaped from the dungeon. Since all three of them are joyously eating, I won’t make any unnecessary complaints.

After expressing gratitude for the gourmet meal, I make the request. Even if the quality of food must drop, I hope that all four of us receive the same meal.

It’s too much trouble to share my dishes every time.

Preparation for the much anticipated bath, starts with four male servants bringing in a marble bathtub that fits only one person.

Then, several men scurry back and forth, carrying water that was heated elsewhere, making quite a fuss about it.

I was certain they were going to use Life Magic to quickly conjure up hot water.

After one hour of preparation, the bath is now ready.

I feel a little sorry for troubling the laborers this much, but it’s no use to start caring now. I’ll tip them generously later!

“How about going in together?”

“Yea~”

“Together *nano desu!*”

I invite Pochi and Tama who are looking at the bath tub with interest, since there shouldn't be a problem taking a bath with primary school-aged kids.

Well, they're wearing *yugi*⁵ anyways, but we do have to go into the bath fully naked later.

"Before going into the bath, let's clean ourselves first!"

I teach the eagerly responding kids how to use soap.

"Wowow~The white stuff is getting bigger~?"

"It's puffy *nano desu*!"

"Well, the dirt is coming right off—what do you think, *goshujin-sama*?"

Before I noticed, Liza has gotten in with Pochi and Tama like it was natural.

The soap bubbles are aptly hiding the important parts, but taking a bath with a high school-aged girl like her still feels a little scandalous. Though she is flat as a board like Pochi and Tama, her figure from behind is astounding.

"The water is quite warm."

"Weird~? But, so comfy~"

"Using hot water to wash ourselves! So luxurious, yet quite pleasant."

Though they have yet to go in the bathtub, their evaluation of it is high. Liza seems quite happy in particular.

Is it due to long years of being in slavery? It took some effort to clean all the dirt. Meanwhile, the bathwater cooled off a little.

So, I ask the maid to warm the water.

"■■■■ ■■■■■ Heat."

The maid brings in water, adjusts the water level, then heats it with Life Magic.

Using magic to reheat the water?

Wait, that's not the main concern here.

Why does she need to wear that to use magic? I ask myself this. Though I can't see everything, she is basically half-naked in a *yugi*. She has a great figure, so if she gets wet, the front will become transparent and it'll be very bad. Seems like the steam is doing its job in another sense.

While thanking her for reheating the bathwater, I try to ask in a roundabout way.

"Yes, in order to service you at any time, I have been standing by in this outfit."

Sigh, so that's it.

It's extremely unfortunate, but I'll do without the service.

If the beastgirls weren't here, I would have gone down the erotic route. How scary.

Since the tub isn't large enough for all of us, we go in to warm ourselves one by one.

Having enjoyed the bath a lot, Liza meekly asks to take another dip, so I take Pochi and Tama to dry off first.

I wipe down the two with soft towels. The maid, now in her dress once more, offers to wipe me down, but I politely turn her down.

I'm not comfortable with that kind of service.

Dinner is a whole roasted bird on an extravagant plate. It looks like chicken, but is actually a bird called Shiga Forktail.

It's difficult to cut open, so for once I put down my pride and ask the maid, who expertly divides it into even portions.

The beastgirls favor the meat near the bones.

It may be a little late, but I'm grateful to the Viscount! A jail cell can never compare with service like this.

Speaking of which, aren't Nidoren and the others still there? It's probably impossible to get them out, but can I improve their conditions?

After the food, I discuss the matter with the maid. Seems like it's possible to give them better food and blankets, but freely distributing provisions is outside of her power, and has to come out of the Viscount's budget.

Is it just about money? In that case, could I just pay for that from Storage?

"How much do they need?"

"If it was only one person, one Silver would be enough, but since there are upwards of ten people, it would require two Gold."

Oh, only this much? I take out two Gold from my pocket for her, and ask her to improve the treatment of those inside the prison.

"Whee~."

"So soft *nano desu!*"

Pochi and Tama are bouncing on the mattress.

Kids would use any bed they see as trampolines.

Liza is also sitting at the edge, carefully appreciating the bounciness of the mattress.

Everyone has their own bed, but Pochi and Tama are asking to sleep together with puppy eyes, so we end up all sharing one bed.

It would be too cruel to leave Liza sleeping by her lonesome.

I lie down on the bed that seems to suck me in.

Inside the dungeon, I was always awake to ensure the beastgirls' safety. I was used to all-nighters, and my Endurance is high, so going without sleep wasn't too stressful.

But it does seem like I have accumulated a lot of exhaustion. As soon as I relax my body on the mattress, the urge to sleep enshrouds me.

Lying between Pochi and Tama with their high body temperatures⁶ like hugging bags of hot water, I enjoy some long-awaited rest.

Life under house arrest was unexpectedly fulfilling.

While I read the beginner spellbook and alchemy book found in the dungeon, time passed quickly.

I practiced casting magic every chance I had, but have yet to complete those impossible chants.

Perhaps unaccustomed to leisurely life, the beastgirls couldn't keep still, so I let them practice sword swings and grappling to let off steam in the lobby.

After running out of books, I asked the maid to purchase more. It would have been suspicious to pay with too much cash, so I used the jewels given by the Viscount as payment.

I also asked her to purchase picture books for Pochi and Tama, but since the two are illiterate, I was the one reading.

It almost felt like having my own children.

In addition, though we are under house arrest, it's not like there aren't any visitors. An official came to see us twice.

The first visit was to return luggage deposited when we had exited the dungeon.

When I hear that "Things found within the dungeon belong to the finder", I am a little surprised.

After all, if someone was murdered and robbed inside a dungeon, the stolen goods can become legitimate this way.

I voice my question with such concerns.

"That is not a problem, since any wrongdoing would be revealed by the Yamato Stone. At places like Dungeon City, guards with the natural talent Eyes of Judgment are posted at the dungeon exit, and the same is true at the gates of Seiryuu City."

Seems to be a convenient talent—likely an inherent skill—that is only found in the families of devout Urion believers.

Among Urion believers, the chance to obtain this gift is one percent, so there are typically several such people at every city.

I wonder what kind of gifts are given to the followers of other deities.

I'm almost certain the name of every god ends with "-on", except Dragon God Aconcagura. Is there some rationale for this?

I got a little sidetracked. That was just the first matter.

The Cores deposited with the luggage have been requisitioned by the county government, leaving me with only a bag of coins with equal value. She says that this is standard practice for any monster hunted within the county, and the dungeon was no exception.

The amount is no less than the market price, so I have no complaints.

Judging by the official's tone of voice, there seems to be a chronic shortage of Cores. Let's be mindful when I dispose of the ones in Storage!

"We cannot verify the safety of this monster meat, so it will be confiscated. This spear is also made from monster tissue, so it is forbidden within this city."

Liza turns around dramatically.

Su-, surprisingly, Liza got mad?

Liza is making a scary face that sends a chill down my spine. Look, the lady's smile froze too.

Since there are concerns of disease, I think disposing the meat is unavoidable. But she seems to really like the spear, so let's negotiate for it!

"That spear is a good weapon, so could you ask someone with the skill Appraisal to judge whether it is dangerous? I'll pay for the appraisal of course, so if it turns out to be safe, please return it to us."

"I-, I understand. I will arrange it. If the appraisal reveals no problems, it will be returned with the other weapons when you leave."

"Alright, please do."

Right, I have to ask about the beastgirls.

"Um, I have a question—"

I try to find out who the beastgirls now belong to.

"I see, you protected these slaves whose master had died, and brought them out of the dungeon?"

“Yes, that’s right.”

Liza also nods slightly. Pochi and Tama are lazed over Liza’s legs. It’s too boring for them, huh?

“In that case, these demi-human slaves are now yours.”

“Is that so?”

I thought I would have to buy them first before I can free them.

“Slaves who lost their master in the dungeon, just like items found within the dungeon, belong to the person who collected them, as long as the master was not murdered for this purpose. So by both law and convention, you are the master of these slaves.”

The lady writes something on a piece of official-looking paper and hands that to me.

“This is an official, temporary proof of ownership of these slaves, valid only within the city. Please go to a slave trading business or agency soon to enact a proper slave contract.”

I ask whether it can be done within the citadel, but apparently the responsible agency is different, so it would be impossible. In this world, the government seems to also be vertically organized⁷.

At that time, I informed her of the names of the deceased I found inside the dungeon, and gave her their hair. The second visit was to report the results.

Outside the temporary encampment at the dungeon exit, a list of the deceased’s name given by their family had been posted, so the locks of their hair were properly delivered. The family would have to pay me in equal value for anything they require from the deceased’s personal effects, which would be taxed.

After telling the official that I won’t ask for rewards, I get the following reply.

“Please do, or else there will be nefarious people claiming to be related to the deceased.”

Oh, I see. Greedy people might take advantage of that.

If I don't feel right asking for a reward, I can donate it to an orphanage or a temple, so she suggests.

Ahh, sounds like a plan. I'll discuss potential recipients with Zena later.

On the fifth day in house arrest, Zena and Ouna came to see me together.

While we sip a tea brewed by the maid named "Blue Ruby"—a ridiculous name for a tea—I try to catch up on the situation.

"So, Zena, you two have been released from house arrest?"

"Yes, due to the lack of magicians, I was quickly released from house arrest, but I've been stationed at the temporary encampment outside the dungeon exit since."

"That sounds rough."

Despite having just escaped from the dungeon, she's already on duty. I've never met the Count, but he's sounds very strict!

"I'm the point of contact for the dungeon exploration team, so it's not that much work. The professional magicians, though, have been exhausting their mana setting up the barrier to prevent the dungeon from extending under the city."

"The magicians aren't the only busy ones, my Temple has been preparing for the consecration ritual for the finished monolith. I haven't had time to sleep in three days."

Ouna, if you're that busy, you didn't have to come with Zena. Just rest at the Temple.

"The encampment outside the dungeon has been obscured behind a fence, and the rumors are being quelled by restricting what the bards on the streets can say, so the rest of you should be released as well within a few days, Mr. Satou."

Sounds great. Though it's comfortable here, I'm starting to get tired of it.

The bards seem to be similar to newscasters. If this were a game, they would be important party members for support. That's new.

The actual release came three days after Zena's visit.

"Master Satou!"

On the way to the citadel gate, we meet with Nidoren and the others who were also released.

"I heard from the guards. Master Satou provided warm food and blankets for us. We are all very grateful."

Having noticed my presence with Nidoren's words, the other men also thank me profusely. The topic quickly becomes about the good food inside jail. Well, good thing their treatment did improve.

"Thanks, the food there was better compared to the westside!"

"For sure. There was no alcohol, but I didn't think there would be meat stew inside jail!"

"That was really good! I wanted to stay a few days longer."

"When I tell everyone back at westside, no one is gonna believe me."

"Yup."

The men say then start laughing heartily. These people had been jailed yet did not become dejected, and I want to emulate their firm spirits.

Nidoren offers to process the beastgirls' contracts for free as thanks, so we proceed to his slave market where he is waiting.

I want to go along, but the rental carriage driver refuses to serve the beastgirls, so we will walk there.

In the Duchy in the south or the Dungeon City in the southwest, the treatment of demi-humans seem to be a little better. Maybe I should move to those places.

"Hey, Dog Ear over there."

Is that loafer guy looking for trouble again? I turn around in frustration. Indeed, standing there is the blond young man we had saved from the spider in the dungeon.

Reminds me, when I was talking to Nidoren, he seemed to want to say something.

"What is it?"

“Not you, I have business with the twerp there.”

Your life was saved like that, and still want to berate her? What an ungrateful bastard!

I glare at him without reserve, but he pays me no mind. A dangerous-looking macho man catches my eyes, but he panickingly looks away and disappears into an alley.

What was that about? I even got the Threatening skill. I don't get it.

While I was distracted by the other guy, the young man merely tells Pochi what he wanted to say—

“Thank you for saving me. I'm sorry for kicking you before.”

—then leaves.

Though the voice was quiet, besides me, Pochi and everyone else clearly heard it.

I don't think his annoying attitude will improve, but at least he's a little nicer, so it's fine.

I thoroughly caress Pochi who is looking up at me with pride, wagging her tail like it is about to fly off.

I also pet Tama who tackles my side, while Liza nods as she looks lovingly at these two. Are you their mother or something?



After that, I signed the contract as the beastgirls' master at Nidoren's place.

I was going to leave immediately, but at his insistence that I take a look at the slaves left after the auction, I decided to do him a favor.

Though the beastgirls were my slaves, I intended to release them as soon as I could, and didn't plan on purchasing new ones. Actually, I'd much rather hire a tour guide.

The slaves Nidoren would introduce were leftover from the auction, so they were problem slaves in reality.

Having casually ignored the showcase of slaves so far, I play along until there are only two left to introduce.

Seeing the next girl, I quickly change my evaluation of Nidoren's ability as a slave trader.

I see, the reason he has been showing me problem slaves until now is to let this girl stand out!

The girl is the Japanese-style gorgeous teen I saw on Central Boulevard before.

She is fourteen and quite young, but her looks exude an undeniably marvelous grace. Her long, straight black hair is giving an impression of purity like in a bottle water commercial. If I were a lolicon, I would probably go for her.

"My name is Lu-, Lulu."

With a mumbling whisper, she announces her name. Perhaps quite the shy kind, after only one sentence, she lowers her head again.

Her exceptionally beautiful face hidden once again under her black hair.

Nidoren takes over speaking for Lulu, but what he says makes me doubt my ears.

"Though an *ugly* girl, she possesses the skill Etiquette—"

This girl is ugly?

If she's not good looking, then neither are 99% of all women, you know?

I wonder if that was just an indirect way of praising her beauty, but it

doesn't seem likely from the way he put it.

Are the standards of beauty just different?

With Nidoren's permission, I get to touch her hair and cheeks.

No, I haven't succumbed to her charms and become a lolicon. I wanted to make sure of something, so I am doing a test.

I whisper a sentence in her ear, and as if having heard something incomprehensible, she looks confused.

I didn't think it was possible, but she seems not to be Japanese.

The next one introduced was the purple-haired little girl named Arisa I had seen transported with Lulu.

She was quite young at eleven, but also a beautiful child with smooth flowing hair and Scandinavian facial features.

Although not exactly on Lulu's level, but for a beauty like her to be leftover, it must have been due to the ominous titles I saw.

Arisa stares at me cravingly with her almond eyes wide.

You could say she's completely awestruck.

"Master Satou, my apologies. She is normally such an observant and witty girl, no one would even care about the purple hair color, but it seems like she has been captivated by your charm..."

While making up a strange excuse, Nidoren makes his sales pitch of the little girl.

No, no way that's true no matter how you put it. I can't help but smile wily.

So, it wasn't her titles but her hair color that prevented her sale?

I do think purple hair is rare to behold, but how is it sinister?

"Nice to meet you, Master *Satou*."

Though she sounds no different than a child's, there's something about the way she pronounced my name.

"I am Arisa, a slave from a fallen nation. I will bring you as much knowledge of *this world* as you wish, and provide aid in various ways."

Unlike her clearly juvenile voice, her words are sharp and concise. It feels like a self-promotional speech of a college student at a job fair. Maybe it's just me.

Despite the grim titles, she introduced herself without breaking that dignified smile befitting of a former princess. Only, I feel like there is more to the phrase "various ways".



She's just a primary-school-aged child, so I don't intend for anything sexual, you know?

Disregarding her hair color, the way she said "this world" and the name Arisa has made me very curious.

Again with Nidoren's permission, I try the same thing with Arisa as I had just done with Lulu.

"Noo—get it off, I hate spiders! Sheesh, you're mean!"

The affected, princess-like mannerism earlier is gone without a trace, and she reacts like any normal girl.

That's right, I had whispered to each of them in *Japanese*: "There's a spider in your hair!"

I'm not sure how Arisa is originally written, but she's definitely the same as me.

Lulu and Arisa.

Perhaps ever since I saw those two on that carriage, I was destined to become their "Master".

Afterword

Thank you very much for picking up this book!

And, my deepest gratitude for those of you who purchased it!

Nice to meet you, this is Ainana Hiro (愛七ひろ).

This includes those who have supported the web version. Since it's the first time we meet on paper, I think this greeting was most appropriate. This series "Death Marching to the Parallel World Rhapsody" began its run on the web novel site "Let's Become a Novelist (小説家になろう)" on March 3, 2013 and after more than six months of daily updates, it is currently being continued at the pace of one chapter per week.

Fortunately, through the support of many readers and the large amount of reviews encouraging me to continue writing, I was able to gain the favor of Fujimi Shobo (富士見書房) who brought up the matter of publication with me, much to my surprise, which led to the birth of this book.

In the process of writing this book with the web version in mind, I focused on three things.

Firstly, "A book that can satisfy readers of the web version".

Thanks to the existence of my web readers, I was able to publish this book. After they buy the book, it would be tragic for it to merely sit on their bookshelf.

Therefore, I didn't just edit the manuscript, but also added some scenes that can be better enjoyed after reading the web version. Of course, there's no point to just adding inside jokes, so they are things first time readers can treat as regular foreshadowing.

My web readers will definitely want to retort the protagonist and I during various scenes, I hope.

Therefore, don't just leave it on the shelf, please do give it a read.

The second is “A book that’s enjoyable by new readers even if they only read the physical copy”.

Though it should be obvious, but a series that assumes knowledge of the web version in the first volume is too tough. So I added expositions that people who don’t know “Novelist” memes can understand, and cut down on excessive explanations and dull scenes that dragged on.

Thirdly, “A book that people will want to read again”.

Those of you that thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, please do read it once more. There may be some small thing you missed when skimming. With these things in mind, I edited parts that weren’t well-received in the web version, and added to sections that were well-liked. Under such pressure to make improvements, seventy percent of the content ended up being new material, and the remaining thirty has also been polished, so I think it would be hard to find any section that is still exactly like the web version.

There are many new scenes, so I really recommend this book to those of you still hesitating.

Though it was a difficult but enjoyable writing process, it wasn’t always a smooth sailing.

I originally planned to work on this book during the off-season of my day job, but due to the delay of a project, the result is a hellish situation where it completely overlapped with work on the book.

I am already used to overtime hell at my day job, but as to whether in this completely new hell, I would be summoned to another world, that shall remain a secret.

It’s depressing to keep writing about work, so enough of that.

Finally, words of thanks.

Everyone at Fujimi Shobo, in particular my editor Mr. H; Shri-sensei who drew the beautiful illustrations for me; and those involved in the design, printing, and distribution: Thanks so much!

Then there are my readers: I sincerely thank you for reading this book!

See you next volume!

Ainana Hiro



Translator Notes

1. Probably referring to Niconico Douga (ニコニコ動画)
2. He calls his junior 後輩氏, literally “Junior”. The suffix “-shi” isn’t that common, but it’s mainly used for acquaintances.
3. **On-the-Job Training**
4. He’s called “メタボ氏”. “Metabo” as in metabolism, likely referring to how fat people tend to have metabolic problems.
5. This is something probably obvious to the Japanese readers. Both Satou and Suzuki are common Japanese surnames.
6. Nasu no Yoichi (那須 与一) was a historical figure known for his skilled archery.
 7. **Augmented Reality**
 8. *Kendo* (剣道) vs. *Kenjutsu* (剣術). One is a sport with bamboo swords, the other is a method of combat with bladed swords.
 9. I keep imagining Pochi and Tama’s heads exploding into a mist of blood when Satou pets them and accidentally sneezes, all because they were shedding or something. (I have nothing against them, I swear)
10. Yeah, his “中二心 *chuuni gokoro*”.
11. Yes, Satou, we all know that you are a boobs man.
12. Forgive me if this isn’t entirely accurate, but the first term seems to be the “modern” version of the word written in kanji (乱気流), while the second is the “archaic” version written in katakana as a loan word (タービュランス).
13. **Desktop Music.**

14. Unfortunately, this doesn't carry over in translation. The Chinese used the formal title for a Knight (騎士) rather than the more common term (騎士), but English doesn't have that distinction, as far as I can tell. I'm assuming this is the same in the original Japanese. Also need help on this one. EDIT: I'll take a page from the WN here and borrow a French word.
15. Ladies and gentleman, the Suspension Bridge Effect.
16. Reference to classic anime Space Battleship Yamato.
17. Washi is traditional Japanese paper that's thinner than normal paper.
18. As opposed to being written in kanji, which is standard for vertically written text. (Note that this comes from the Light Novel version, which is originally written vertically) Of course, this translation isn't following that convention, because it's written horizontally and in English.
19. This is pure speculation, but I suspect that Satou didn't keep listening (other than because the author was too lazy to make it up) because he thinks Iona has a thing for Soun. I mean, I feel like Satou is usually pretty nosy, but he keeps his distance here for some reason.
20. SAN represents sanity. So, a world that doesn't wear you down mentally.
21. The phrase “お客さん okyaku-san” (literally “guest”) and variations are how businesses address their customers.
22. You might know this already, but “Hero” here refers to “勇者 Yuusha”, a term popularized by Japanese games.
23. It looks like a pumpkin, but is a root vegetable? I was really confused by this, but that's what was written: “ガボの実は.....根菜だ

った” (even in the WN). By the way, the Gapo berry (ガボの実 *Gabo no Mi*) is probably named after the Japanese name for pumpkin (カボチャ *kabocha*).

24. If you read an earlier version of this, you probably know that I said these two aren't who people think they are, but I was wrong. I missed their verbal tics because they were not as obvious in Chinese.
25. Obviously, he's referring to Amazon.
26. UNICLO, former name of UNIQLO, pronounced letter by letter, in *romanji* (“ウニシロ *U-Ni-C-Lo*”). Note that the *romanji* ‘U’ is always pronounced as the vowel sound (“ooh”). This joke was originally lost on me when I looked at the Chinese translation...
27. **Time, Place, Occasion:** It's a commonly used term in Japanese because acting and dressing appropriately for the occasion is very important to them.
28. Let me remind you that the divider only goes up to the waist, so Satou can see everything.
29. Abbreviation of “童貞 *doutei*”, referring to virginity .
30. Consommé is a type of soup made from meat and vegetable stock, filtered and clarified with egg whites.
31. She's likely changing levels of formality. I can't tell for certain from the Chinese.
32. There's no good way to translate this. Satou only knew how the name is pronounced, and now he has reason to suspect it's written/spelled the way he expected it. As an aside, Yamato is an old name for Japan. Whether that person intended that is, well, unknown (for now).

33. You might know this if you know anything about Japan at all, but miso and soy sauce are very important sauces there.
34. Reference to the C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*.
35. Sweet potato and yam are actually different plants. Yam is usually more common in Japan, by the way.
36. Again, Satou is guessing how their names are written in Kanji. The names “嵯峨” and “佐賀” are both pronounced “Saga”.
37. Yoshiwara was the red light district in Edo (old name for Tokyo).
38. They're here! Just in case you don't know, I'm going to talk a little about how they speak. Tama tends to drag on her words and sometimes leave out or repeat the last syllable, whereas Pochi adds some variation of “なのです nano desu”, and most of the time it's to emphasize what Tama says. I will do my best to make out which form she is saying, but I can't exactly tell from the Chinese translation.
39. If you read the WN, you'll know that this guy ends his sentence in “吾輩 wagahai” plus something. It's difficult to translate it well, so just keep that in mind.
40. In other words, like an old movie.
41. IIRC, both the English and the Chinese WN translation interpreted the sentence differently, but checking the raw WN, I find that the Chinese LN translation is correct. The original WN sentence says “リザは蜥蜴(リザード)からでは無く本名の最初の2文字をカットしただけだ。”
42. Tama always mispronounces “はい *hai*” as “あい *ai*”.

43. No, not the study of birth defects, but the study of fantasy creatures. I can't think of a better name. "Terato-" meaning "monstrous, marvelous".
44. The full phrase should be "なむあみだぶつ *Namu Amida Butsu*", which originated from Sanskrit "Namo Amitābha". It is often used as a simple Buddhist prayer.
45. Referencing the WN, Liza at first addresses him as "旦那さま *danna-sama*", then as "ご主人様 *goshujin-sama*". The nuance here is too subtle for me to explain succinctly so you can look up the exact meanings if you wish. Also, I've only anglicized the latter instead of translating it, and if you need to know the reason just consult my notes included in the update post.
46. I think he's referring to the Elder Scroll games.
47. **Optical Character Recognition** is a way to convert images of documents to digital text.
48. Referring to the mascot of the Dragon Quest series, which was (and still is to an extent) wildly popular in Japan.
49. I think he's referring to Bubble Bobble, where an invincible ghostly whale comes in if you don't complete a level quickly.
50. Tomoe nage is a Judo technique where one rolls backwards and throws the opponent over their head.
51. The Chinese used two different words for fire, so I'm assuming that they're different types of magic. If I have to guess, "Flame Magic" is probably more advanced "Fire Magic".
52. It seems like the giant has the same speech pattern as the eyeball, with a slight difference.

53. Seiza (正座) is sitting up straight with your legs beneath your thighs.
54. Yeah, doesn't Sebastian sound like just the name for a butler? Also, Deschamps (pronounced kinda like "dey-SHAWM") is a guess from just googling, but it sure sounds quite formidable.
55. *Jou* is the size of a full standard tatami mat and is the typical unit of area for a single room. *Tsubo* is twice the size and measures larger areas. Eight *jou* is about 140 square feet (13 square meters), while 200 *tsubo* about 7100 square feet (660 square meters).
56. About 530 square feet (50 square meters).
57. About 200 square feet (33 square meters).
58. An *yugi* (湯着, also ゆゆ着 *yuyugi* or 湯浴み着/湯浴衣 *yuamigi*) is a really short bathrobe meant to be worn at hot springs, especially mixed baths. Well, if you google for pictures, you'll see what I mean. Don't do this at work though.
59. Normal body temperature of both cats and dogs are higher than that of humans. Or maybe it's just because they're children. Seems like much of Satou's observations about these two come down to this conclusion.
60. That is, different departments of an organization do not have much contact if one is not directly subordinate to the other.
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